

A hermeneutic inquiry of high school principals’ roles as instructional leaders

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The prevailing poor academic performance in South African high schools, particularly in grade 12, appeals for a persistent examination of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. Mathematics is one of the subjects that suffers the most. Drawing from Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, I conceptually conduct a documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders from national education policies, and high three school principals from varying school contexts from two Western Cape Education Districts.

To understand the principals' roles as instructional leaders I constructed three meanings from the literature; these are stating the school's vision and mission, managing the instructional programme, and creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning. These are further understood in their respective sub-meanings. The educational policies I analysed articulate these meanings in varying extents, some too implicitly. The high school principals also articulated these meanings at different degrees with regard to their contexts. Albeit their schools having schools vision displayed in their offices and some in school corridors, none of these principals mentioned the school vision as a strategy of influencing the direction of the school. None of the three principals has articulated the stating of vision and mission as his/her role working with other stakeholders. Nonetheless, the three principals articulated their roles as instructional leaders require them to act as both managers and leaders and the effects of asserting these roles in their schools' academic results.

KEYWORDS: Hermeneutics, instructional leaders, principal(s), high school, managers, leaders

OPSOMMING

Die heersende swak akademiese prestasie in Suid-Afrikaanse hoërskole, veral in graad 12, doen 'n beroep op 'n volgehoute ondersoek van hoërskoolhoofde se rolle as onderrigleiers. Wiskunde is een van die vakke wat die meeste ly. Op grond van Hans-Georg Gadamer se hermeneutiek voer ek konseptueel 'n dokumentêre analise en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude uit om die rolle van hoërskoolhoofde as onderrigleiers uit nasionale onderwysbeleid te ondersoek en hoe drie skoolhoofde uit verskillende skoolkontekste uit twee Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdistrikte hulle rolle interpreteer.

Om die prinsipale se rolle as onderrigleiers te verstaan, het ek drie betekenis uit die literatuur opgebou; Dit dui op die skool se visie en missie, bestuur die onderrigprogram en skep en onderhou 'n kultuur wat onderrig en leer ondersteun. Dit word verder in hulle onderskeie sub-betekenis verstaan. Die opvoedkundige beleid wat ek geanaliseer het, verwoord hierdie betekenis in wisselende mate, sommige te implisiet. Die hoërskoolhoofde het ook hierdie betekenis op verskillende grade verwoord met betrekking tot hul kontekste. Alhoewel hul skole skolevisie in hul kantore en sommige in skoolkorridors het, het geen van hierdie hoofde die skoolvisie genoem as 'n strategie om die rigting van die skool te beïnvloed nie. Nie een van die drie prinsipale het die verklaring van visie en missie geopper nie, aangesien sy / haar rol met ander belanghebbendes werk. Tog het die drie prinsipale hul rolle geartikuleer, aangesien onderrigleiers hulle vereis om as bestuurders en leiers op te tree en die uitwerking daarvan om hierdie rolle in die akademiese resultate van hul skole te beweer.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Hermeneutiek, onderrigleiers, skoolhoof (s), hoërskool, bestuurders, leiers

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED

DBE	Department of Basic Education
RSA	Republic of South Africa
DSG	Didactics Study Guide
ANAs	Annual National Assessments
DoE	Department of Education
SASA	South African Schools Act
ELAA	Education Laws Amendment Act
The standard	The Policy on South Africa Standard for Principalship
HD	Head of Department
HoDs	Heads of Departments (Departmental heads) - (school level)
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership programme
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
n.d.	No date
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
BEd. Hons.	Bachelor of Honours Degree
USA	United States of America
IQ	Intelligence Quotient/ rational intelligence
NDP	National Development Plan
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
PIMRS	Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale
LTSM	learning and teaching support material
SMT	School Management Team
SGB	School Governing Body
PRasIL	principals' roles as instructional leaders
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
ANC	African National Congress
WCEDts	Western Cape Education Districts

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The success of schools in achieving academic outcomes is the principal's accountability. This is Kruger's (2003) assertion in his qualitative study to investigate the practice of instructional leadership and its impact on the culture of teaching and learning in two secondary schools in Gauteng. According to Winch and Gingell (2008:4), the term accountability describes a moral relationship that is established between two parties where the second party/person is assigned as a person of authority in an undertaking by the first party/person. Following this, high school principals are held accountable by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for the academic performance of learners. Kruger (2003:206) further notes that principals' accountability to make a difference in the academic standards of the school has become an overriding belief in both educational and governmental spheres. Thus, principals have to undertake their primary task – to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place in a school (Kruger, 2003:206). Kruger cautions that the complexity of this task requires a clear understanding of this responsibility and the tasks associated with it.

My research is conceptual. Reflecting on my personal interests, beliefs, experiences and aspirations, the latter assertion by Kruger justifies the point of, first, getting a 'clear' understanding of a phenomenon before one can consider its practice/application. In this study I conduct a hermeneutical inquiry of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. The inquiry first analyses the relevant education policies with the assumption that they inform principals of their roles as instructional leaders. I believe that analysing the said text will make me gain a deeper understanding of and insights into the phenomenon under inquiry. Furthermore, three principals of different high school contexts in two Western Cape Education Districts (WCEDTs), who happen to produce acceptable or excellent matric results, were interviewed. The interviews explored the concept of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders through their articulation of the roles they play as instructional leaders, and the effects thereof on the academic performance of their schools.

The principal's instructional leadership has been a focal point of scholars, researchers and policy-makers, both internationally and in South Africa (SA) (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:15; Grobler, 2014; Naicker & Mestry, 2016:1). Some researchers and scholars (Bush, 2008:275 & 284; Bendikson, Robinson & Hattie, 2012:3) do not use the term instructional leadership, but it is implied.

For example, some investigate the principal's leadership and management effects on learners' academic performance, others study the principal's leadership of learning, and so on. Jenkins (2009:34) argues that instructional leadership has made its return recently, putting 'increasing importance on academic standards' and the need for school accountability. In support of this notion, Taole (2013:75) argues that instructional leadership 'has gained its popularity', with much attention placed on 'academic standards' and the need for accountability in schools. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, the poor academic performance of learners, especially in high schools and particularly in grade 12 (matric and grade 12 will be used interchangeably in this study), has been a great concern of the government, education departments (higher and basic) and other stakeholders. This problem of academic poor performance in matric was notable after the establishment of one national department of education, characterised by the decentralisation of powers and prompted by the democratic principles of the country. The two main ends of the 'unified entity' were to 'raise the educational standards' and to 'promote local democracy' (Bush & Heystek, 2006:63). For me, it seems that the prevailing situation of academic underperformance by schools is one of the aspects that has called for a re-examination of the roles of principals as instructional leaders.

Kruger (2003) studied the impact of instructional leadership in the culture of teaching and learning in two high schools in the East Rand, Gauteng. In outlining the background to his research Kruger (2003:206) cites, first and foremost, the poor matric results, and notes that it has been the case for 'the past number of years' and principals ought to assume the position of being 'leaders of instruction'. Masitsa (2005) argues that the poor performance of grade 12 learners in township high schools is due to the 'erosion of [a] learning culture' in these schools. He further contends that principals, as instructional leaders, need to take initiatives to restore the learning culture. Lastly, Masitsa (2005:205, 207) points out that it is the principal, in his 'suitable position' as both manager and instructional leader, to 'lead and guide' the school to attain a good academic performance and he refers to this as the principal's primary responsibility. Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012) asserts that the role of principals as instructional leaders is an implication of effective teaching and learning. Mestry (2013) asserts that the innovative role of the principal as an instructional leader is a prerequisite for 'high student achievement'. Mestry (2013:120) cautions that principals should have ample teaching experience, since 'instructional leadership demands high standards of academic excellence'. Recently, Naicker and Mestry (2016:1) argued that learners from historically disadvantaged parts of this country have not improved their academic performance. As a result, they are marginalised by higher education institutions. Moreover, Naicker and Mestry (2016) assert that '(t)he continuous poor performance of South African learners is detrimental to its developing economy'. They conducted their study in a district that is well known for the poor academic

performance of grade 12 learners. In support of Naicker and Mestry's notion of poor academic performance being detrimental to the country's economy, I would like to bring to light that mathematics is one subject in which high school learners are performing worryingly low. This was the case for grade 9 mathematics in the Annual National Assessments (ANAs). The ANAs started in 2012 and were halted in 2015, after running for three years without the results improving; instead, they became worse in 2014 (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015:22-23; Van der Berg, 2016:2). In grade 12, learners are performing poorly in mathematics – both in quantity and in quality (DBE, 2015:24-25). Umalusi (2016:2), the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, when endorsing the 2016 national examination results, asserted that learners were performing 'critically low' in mathematics. This becomes a matter of serious concern, since mathematics opens doors to a variety of scarce skills in the country and promises an enhancement of the economy in the future. The Minister of Basic Education (DBE, 2015:2) puts mathematics first in the list of critical subjects. It is further stated in the Action Plan to 2019 (DBE, 2015:25) that the country needs the 'high level of mathematics skills' required in the engineering field.

Returning to the issue of the principal's instructional leadership as a point of concern among scholars, researchers and policy-makers, the Department of Education (DoE), from 2007 to 2009, piloted an Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE) for principals and those aspiring to be principals in six provinces, (Bush, Kiggundu & Moroosi, 2011:31). Managing teaching and learning was one of the 'core modules' of the course, meaning that it was compulsory for all candidates (Bush *et al.*, 2011:34). In its presentation on 'Improving leadership and management in schools', the DBE (2015b) notes that: 1. 'effective school management is universally accepted as being the critical element in the success of a school'. 2. Challenges of leadership are considered to be the main contributor to underperformance and dysfunctionality in schools. What I can gather from the DBE's declarations can be summed up by reference to Masitsa's (2005:206) contention that 'the principal's management of the school is effective only if it results in effective instruction', hence, the principal must be an instructional leader.

Thus, I next provide the motivation for the study and an analysis of the concept of philosophy of education. I further discuss the problem statement and briefly outline the aim of the study. In addition, I clarify the key concepts of the study and provide a summary of the chapter. Lastly, the programme of the study is provided.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

It has always been my strong belief, as a learner and as a teacher, that school culture and learners' academic performance are largely influenced by the school principal. However, at that time I did not have any theory or knowledge to back up my conviction. Back in 2006, I invited my principal, who had never formerly visited my class, to visit the grade 10 History class which I taught Mathematical Literacy (ML) and observe my ML lesson. This class did not want anything to do with numbers and this was affecting their academic performance in the subject. I was not sure whether there was something that I was not doing right. I find this to be in agreement with Mestry's (2013:120) contention that principals as instructional leaders 'should understand with first-hand experience the instructional challenges faced by teachers'. Additionally, Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu and Van Rooyen (2009:164) assert that quality teaching and learning and learners' achievements are the direct responsibilities of principals. Thus, principals are supposed to 'establish a direct observation of an educator teaching' (Bush *et al.*, 2009:165). This can help in identifying and correcting the problem areas before matric that are always a key determining factor in the school's (in)effectiveness.

I sketched my classroom situation to the principal before the visit and relied on his reflection and inputs in our post-visit meeting to improve my instruction. This corresponds with the research (Hoadley & Ward, 2009:12; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2013:12; Geleta, 2015:2), which concludes that developing teachers to use 'effective instructional strategies and interventions' (Geleta, 2015:3) is one of the principal's responsibilities as instructional leader. Although I expected his intervention, I did not know how he would do it. I could only hope that, if my teaching approach (which was mostly 'hands-on') was not relevant, he could tell me and advise me. However, this was not based on any theory, except for 'Ubuntu'. According to Gage and Smith (2016:4), leaders who practise Ubuntu principles they have a potential to develop individuals and grow an organisation's capacity. Concerning leaders who adopt Ubuntu principles, Gage and Smith (2016:4) assert that '(t)hey are innovators who empower and nurture'. This was what I hoped to hear from my principal.

Another school that I have worked for did not have a school vision and mission. This troubled me as a new teacher in the school. Discussions were always based on instances or incidents and we were expected to come up with suggestions. I felt somewhat lost, as I did not know the common direction of influence that I must advocate for in my mathematics classes and when I interacted with learners outside the classroom. According to Bush (2007:400), the direction of influence becomes the instructional leaders' focus point. Van der Merwe (2016:2) argues that instructional leadership is based on three dimensions, viz. defining the school's vision, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive school-learning culture. Thus, principals as instructional leaders are expected to draw up a school's vision. Van der Merwe (2016:2) notes the importance of the school's

vision and mission to teachers, as these help them sustain the teaching and learning culture and manage classroom functioning. It appears that principals as instructional leaders need to state the school's vision so that it describes the ends of the school's core purpose of existence, which is teaching and learning.

I learned in the Didactics lecture in 2016 that principals are expected to be curriculum leaders and play a role of instructional leadership. The Didactics 769 Study Guide (BEd Hons Study Guide, 2004:34) cited what it referred to as the dimensions of the instructional leadership of a principal, namely institutional development, curriculum development and staff development. Furthermore, the study guide noted that it was the principal's instructional leadership that promoted teacher involvement in curriculum development (BEd Hons Study Guide, 2004:38). I was intrigued. A number of questions crossed my mind in an instant: How do principals become instructional leaders? What is an instructional leader? Are principals aware of their role(s) as instructional leaders? What is the position of education policies in regard to the roles of principals as instructional leaders? The quest and determination to answer these questions began in my mind.

When I registered for the Bachelor of Honours degree in Education – Curriculum Studies, I chose Philosophy of Education as one of my additional modules. In this module, we learned different approaches to knowledge construction, namely the positivist, interpretivist, critical theory and post-structuralism approaches. When it came to choosing a suitable approach to my study, I was convinced that my interest was to understand the roles of principals as instructional leaders. This implied that I needed to interpret the concept of the role(s) of principals as instructional leaders. Consequently, I became certain that I needed an in-depth conceptual understanding of principals' roles in instructional leadership. Since my interest was to understand the concept, hermeneutics became a relevant approach for this research. I therefore decided to conduct a hermeneutical inquiry of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders from (1) the relevant statutory documents and/or education policies; and (2) the narratives of high school principals. This gave rise to the research title: A hermeneutical inquiry of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders.

1.3 PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

This research is located in the field of philosophy of education, and as such the concept of philosophy of education needs to be clarified. McManus-Holroyd (2007:1) advises that clarifying conditions can lead to understanding. In this study, conditions are conceptual, thus, explicating the meaning of philosophy of education is one of the conditions leading to an understanding of this concept.

Conceptual analysis, according to Sytsma (2010:4), ‘generally concerns articulations of the primary meanings of common terms that are of philosophical interest’. I therefore proceeded from the view of conceptual analysis, breaking down concepts into their basic concepts or terms, exploring how these terms are understood (Gericke, 2013:344) and bringing their meanings to light (Coetzee & Venter, 2016:7). It seems as if these meanings may be general, literal or particular and relevant to the study. In the case of philosophy of education, the main constitutive composite terms are philosophy and education. This approach will assist in acquiring a deeper and clearer understanding of what philosophy of education is and what its role is in understanding education phenomena. In an attempt to explore the meaning of philosophy of education, the first question that needs to be answered is: what is philosophy? Below is my attempt to answer this question in a discursive approach.

1.3.1 What is philosophy?

Historically, the word philosophy was first coined by Pythagoras of Simos, a Greek philosopher in the sixth century (Kimura, 2006:4; Gericke, 2013:345). As recorded by Deschamps (2014), Pythagoras refused to be identified as wise, arguing that he was not wise, but that he loved wisdom. In his words, ‘I am not Sophos, wise; but Philo-sophos, a lover of wisdom; and my followers shall be called Philosophers’. Thus, philosophy is a compound word with its origins in two Greek words, namely ‘philein’ or ‘philio’, which means ‘to love’, and ‘sophia’, which means ‘wisdom’ (Kimura, 2006:3; Asouzu, 2011:80). Mostly, proponents of the field assert that, literally, philosophy means the love of wisdom (Kimura, 2006:3; De Beer, 2009:22; Gericke, 2013:343 & 345; Ramose, 2015:515). This love of wisdom appears to imply that one undertakes the pursuit of wisdom only for the love of it. According to Asouzu (2011:80), philosophy is the ‘natural urge to love wisdom’, and it leads to a selfless quest to find and give honest answers to existing questions. Therefore, ‘philosophers’ desire is to enlighten selflessly’ (Asouzu, 2011:80). The point is that philosophers’ pursuit of wisdom despises glory and any kind of profit except for wisdom. De Beer (2009:220) says philosophy is a ‘calling from within’.

According to Hirst and Peters (1998:28), we can discern philosophy as an activity that has its concern in the second-order questions. For these authors, second-order questions are types of questions that result from reflections about activities such as ‘science, painting pictures, worshipping and making moral judgement’. Hirst and Peters also acknowledge that not all reflective and second-order questions are philosophical; only those second-order questions that concern reflection about concepts are philosophical. Thus, put simply, philosophy concerns itself with questions on the analysis of concepts and questions concerning the grounds of belief, knowledge, and actions and activities (Hirst

& Peters, 1998:28). The point about philosophy is the activity of conceptual analysis, its business is to make clearer the concepts that previously existed in confusion, and perhaps misunderstanding. As implied by Hirst and Peters (1998:29), philosophy seeks to identify meanings and justification of the grounds of knowledge through the analysis of concepts. Therefore, I deemed philosophy as the field in which to situate my study, as it is concerned with understanding the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. That is, the concept of principals' roles as instructional leaders needs to be made clearer to me for my own understanding of the concept. I consider this quest as my pursuit of wisdom.

Philosophy, as seen by Spangenberg (2009:89), is the 'quest for thought without an image'. For me, this means that philosophy and philosophising are not limited to what can be seen, experimented or observed. Instead, they allow human beings to escape from the restrictions of what is concrete or even said to be a fact. According to Spangenberg (2009:89), thinking for philosophers does not come after establishing the real world, nor a 'truest image', but to make it clear that, by not allowing one image to be predominant, thinking is 'maximised'. The point is that philosophy is not passive but active, hence philosophising; it does not settle for convergence or feel satisfied with the status quo. According to Strauss (2009:3), philosophy is 'constantly involved in wrestling with boundary questions'. By boundary questions, he seems to refer to those issues that put or act as restrictions on human experience and knowledge. Philosophy sees what the issue is at present, but is more interested in thinking about what it can be. Thus, philosophers are not limited to the now and to the given.

Moreover, unlike ethicists and scientists, who pose questions while supposing answers, philosophers' intentions are to pose questions without supposing solutions (Dunst, 2007:136). The point is that, when philosophers ask questions, they do so to allow for unconstrained thinking and opportunities for deep thinking to obtain enriched insights, whereas scientists ask questions that close down the scope of thought, since answers are presumed in the form of 'hypotheses'. Dunst (2007:140) further argues that, for philosophy, the attainment of a solution implies the end to a problem but suggests the beginning of a new problem. Hence, infinity is 'the iteration problem of philosophy' (Dunst, 2007:141). It appears that, with philosophy, once the solution or answer to a question is attained it opens opportunities for new questions as the philosopher reflects on the solution.

Consequently, philosophers yearn to answer to three 'sorts of questions', which are: What do you mean? How do you know? And what is presupposed? (Jacobs, 2012:6). According to Jacobs, the philosopher asks what you mean to explore the conceptual meaning of the words used in the statement. This question can also be seen as a reflective question, as it is possible for the philosopher

to ask himself/herself more questions for clarity as he/she continues digging for the meaning of the given statement or concept. Jacobs (2012:6) indicates that this question does not intend to inquire into a verbal meaning from a particular person. This adds to the notion that the love of wisdom is innate. The second question is, how do you know? According to Jacobs (2012:6), this sort of question seeks to discern ‘thinking errors’, like contradictions, inconsistency, circularity, attacks against persons instead of their argument, incompleteness and category mistakes. This question seems to stimulate thinking upon thinking, with the intention to expose any kind of ‘faulty thinking’ that may have occurred during the previous thinking or attainment of knowledge. Thus, to think well is the ‘principle of morality’ and results in human dignity, which in turn is manifested in the ability of one’s organised thoughts (De Beer, 2009:25). Further to this, Strauss (2009:2) argues that ‘insight and wisdom ought to be guided by virtue’. De Beer (2009:22) shares the same sentiments, pointing out that ‘philosophy can be understood’ as one of the vital ‘contemporary civic urgencies’, since its main themes include God, being, human being, thinking, truth and virtue. This property of philosophy is made clear by the philosophical question: how do you know? The third question that philosophers pose is what is presupposed? Jacobs (2012:6) points out that the analysis of assumptions and presuppositions becomes a philosophical endeavour ‘only when the truth about assumptions or propositions comes into question’, or when there is a need for the clarification of terms to give meaning. The truthfulness of philosophers plays a significant role in answering this third question. I link this claim to De Beer’s (2009:24) argument that stresses that ‘the philosophical way of life is a life of resistance against’ every kind of reduction, be it of truth, knowledge, humans or virtue and so on. The point is, a philosophical activity can be accounted for if the truth about assumptions is brought to light during the clarification of terms and the analysis of assumptions and presuppositions.

According to Kimura (2006:3), philosophy ‘as love of wisdom’ has a ‘multifaceted and multidimensional meaning’. In the same light, Asouzu (2011:79) argues that ‘what philosophy is and its value is contentious’. As such, Ramose (2015:551) claims that the meaning of philosophy is contested. After gleaning some of the meanings in scholarly publications on philosophy from South Africa and internationally, I concur with these arguments that one cannot cite a single meaning for philosophy, primarily because philosophers seem to have different approaches to philosophy, and thinking is limitless. Nonetheless, in this section I have tried to explain what philosophy is, giving a brief history of its origins, its literal meanings and its working meanings. The next question to answer is what education is.

1.3.2 What is education?

The word education derives from two Latin words, ‘educare’ and ‘educere’ (Carr, 2003:3; Winch & Gingell, 2008:63). The word ‘educare’ means to ‘train’ or ‘mould’ or to ‘nourish’, and ‘educere’ means to ‘lead out’ (Bass & Good, 2004; Jacobs, 2012:7). Considering the two words that form the roots of the word ‘education’, it appears that they have significant yet different meanings, but seemingly are not contesting or contrasting meanings. For me, this may suggest a sequence (first mould and nourish, then lead out) or/and overlapping, meaning that it is possible to effect both interchangeably. According to Bass and Good (2004:162), the former views education as a means to preserve and pass down knowledge and thereby shape the youth, perhaps in the image of their predecessors; it is characterised by ‘rote memorisation and becoming good workers’ (Bass & Good, 2004:162). This implies that what was there in the beginning will persist, regardless of its relevance in the present society, meaning that if education can be seen only as ‘educare’, it will produce duplicates of knowledge. Learners are made to receive and store content knowledge and produce it with no modifications. For instance, a mathematics teacher will tell learners that ‘six times six is 36 or x times x is x squared (x^2), and learners have to memorise this without knowing the meaning of these statements. This becomes a situation of ‘no learning has occurred’, when a child is faced, for example, with ‘ cb times c ’, and his/her argument will be ‘I only know x times x which is x square, as for cb times c our teacher has not taught us that yet’. This appears to be education in its conservative form. It is directly associated with what Paulo Freire, in his philosophy of education, identifies as ‘bank education’ (Hage & Lorensen, 2005:239; Cahn, 2012:379; Irwin, 2012:48; Kabende, 2015:13).

Subsequently, ‘educere’ views education as a means of ‘preparing a new generation’ for future changes and challenges, getting them ready to come up with solutions to the yet-to-come problems. It produces learners who can ask questions, think, and become creative (Bass & Good, 2004:162). As for me, education as ‘educere’ prepares learners to be good thinkers, problem solvers, and inventors of knowledge who are able to come up with new insights. Although these words have been discussed separately, they do not exist in separation; instead, they coexist in the word ‘education’. Therefore, schools, and high schools in particular, ought to see to it that both these elements of education comprise their instruction programmes. The questions may arise: How? What proportion of each is required?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I firstly consider asking another question: what is the purpose of education? Secondly, to shed some light on Jacobs’s (2012:7) assertions, that ‘education is regarded as a practice which is concerned with ethical considerations’, I consider the three criteria distinguishing education from other human endeavours. Starting with the purpose of education, Biesta (2009:6) and Peters and Biesta (2009:98) ask the question, ‘(w)hat is education for’, which they

answer by giving three actual functions of education, namely qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Reddy, Le Grange, Beets and Lundie (2015:1) concur with Biesta and reiterate the same education functions. For Biesta, subjectification is a process of ‘individuation’; it is concerned with the ways of being of an individual without only being seen as a sample of a particular social group. That is, subjectification promotes the ways of being that suggest independence from existing social orders (Biesta, 2009:7; Peters & Biesta, 2009:99). Subjectification is concerned with how a ‘learner becomes an independent and critical thinker’ (Reddy *et al.*, 2015:2). It seems to ensure that learners have the ability to make free and conscious choices about their lives based on true knowledge (Hage & Lorensen, 2005:239). Thus, according to Biesta (2009:8), ‘any education [that] is worthy of its name should always contribute to processes of subjectification that allow those educated to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting’. For me, subjectification has implications of preparing high school principals to perform their instructional leadership roles.

According to Reddy *et al.* (2015:1-2), qualification is concerned with ‘providing knowledge, skills, and attitudes’ to learners and these will enable them to carry out certain tasks. Socialisation is involved in making learners become members of ‘particular social, cultural and political orders’, for instance if a learner is socialised into a mathematics discipline, he/she will be inducted into how to think mathematically (Reddy *et al.*, 2015:2). In agreement with this notion, Carr (2003:6) says that it involves the socialisation of a person into a ‘particular human culture’ in which values, habits and practices are transmitted through education. Further to this, Cahn (2012:211) says that education needs to ‘produce a man with both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction’. Clearly, education as both ‘educare’ and ‘educere’ are manifested here, as thinking mathematically cannot be memorised.

What I can gather here is that, for the purpose of education to be fulfilled, it would need a correct balance of both educare and educere. However, considering the current challenges facing societies, and the age level of high school learners – if one cannot strike a balance between the two, more of ‘educere’ than ‘educare’ at a high school level would be in line with the aims of the current South African curriculum (DBE, 2011:4-5).

The three criteria that distinguish education from other human quests, as asserted by Jacobs (2012:7-8), are, firstly, the ‘concept of education’, which in its comprehensive meaning suggests that something of importance or worth is taking place. As implied in the purpose of education, education involves learning, which, according to Jacobs (2012:7), is not a mystery, unlike maturation. This means that education through learning calls for active participation by a learner and becoming aware

of the learning process and their growth in learning. The normative nature of education is the second criterion that identifies education from other human pursuits (Carr, 2003:6; Jacobs, 2012:7). This criterion relates to socialisation as discussed above. According to Jacobs (2012:7), a person acquires knowledge and understanding beyond mechanical skills, but rather grounded in some sound underlying principles that have ability to transform a person's life who claims to be educated. This transformation affects both the outward appearance of a person and, most importantly, is manifested in his/her attitudes and 'commitment' to the inherent standards of their 'area' of education (Jacobs, 2012:7). Put slightly differently by Carr (2003:6), he argues that persons who acquire a body of knowledge underlain by values and practices of a 'peculiar culture' become 'rational agents who can plan and direct their lives in the light of reasons not entirely bound to that 'peculiar culture'. The cognitive aspect of education is the third criterion that leads to education being viewed as different from other human pursuits (Jacobs, 2012:7). The cognitive processes in education account for 'some understanding of what is learnt', and the requirements of learning (Jacobs, 2012:7). This is where education associates closely with the philosophy of mind. Next, I cast my gaze shortly on philosophy of mind.

1.3.2.1 Philosophy of mind: An implication for education

To introduce this section, I asked myself a question of understanding: How does philosophy of mind relates to the concept of education? I, then encountered Kim (2011:2) who argued that the 'mind-body problem' has been the central problem of philosophy of mind since its introduction; while consciousness is its fundamental phenomenon of interest (Kim, 2011:263). Jacobs, above, noted that education is linked to learning and it constitute cognitive aspects. For me, this suggest that principals should be conscious when engaging with their roles as instructional leaders. They need to be self-conscious, conscious about education policies and their contexts in relation to the school context, and be conscious of their communities.

Vasilyev (2013:15) argues that philosophy is 'not only a sum of truths but also a thinking skill'. Therefore, the mental state of a high school principal as an instructional leader is vital in attaining some attitudes necessary to improve academic performance in the school. Kim (2011:15-16) describes 'propositional attitudes' as products of a mental state of a person with a certain attitude such as hoping, doubting, being certain, intending, deciding, willing and believing towards a proposition. Thus, principals should make propositions conscious that the content of the propositions contains the propositional attitudes that will later become the foundations of a school culture of improvement. In engaging with the policy texts about their roles as instructional leaders their mental

state is key in making propositional attitudes such as willingness, intending, hoping, and even being certain to improve the status quo. For Wedgwood, (2009:421), mental states have intentional content. On the other hand, McGinn (2009:595) contends that logical thinking is a mental image and an act of creation and a philosophical activity. This means that a high school principal imagining an excellent performing school he/she has captured a mental image that needs to be analysed and interpreted for understanding of others. For McGinn (2009:595), imagination is a conceptually based propositional attitude. Imagining an improvement in the mathematics results in the near future of the school requires to be expressed and analysed conceptually. Engaging with these authors made me understand that for education to achieve its purpose depends on quality of a mental state and needs conceptual analysis, the philosophical activity in its problems. The next section will discuss the ‘philosophy of education’.

1.3.3 What is philosophy of education?

Philosophy of education seems to mean different things to different people with different perspectives concerning what ‘the philosophy of education either is or ought to be’ (Wilson, 2003:279). This concurs with Chambliss’s (2009) undertaking in his review essay, ‘Philosophy of education today’. Although Chambliss asserts that the central concern of all the volumes he reviewed was to answer the question: what is philosophy of education? However, one of his objectives was to consider how this question was answered. Each philosopher’s work had a different approach or perspective to philosophy, and consequently to what philosophy of education is. Curren argues that, for philosophy of education to be philosophical, it must be ‘characterised by applying a set of philosophical beliefs to education and practice’ (Chambliss, 2009:235). For Curren, according to Chambliss, developments in philosophy of education in the late twentieth century paved the way for different approaches to analysing questions of ‘theoretical and practical matters that help to understand and guide education’. This is in agreement with Soltis’s (1983:14) contention that one of the valuable functions of philosophy is its ‘provision for perspective’. On the one hand, Blake and his colleagues, in their work *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Education*, introduce it by pronouncing that ‘important and creative work’ is done in the philosophy of education (Chambliss, 2009:235). None of the four volumes give a direct answer that explains what philosophy of education is. Thus, Wilson (2003:281) argues that education philosophers have a lot to say about philosophy of education, but cannot be precise about what it ‘consists of’.

According to Wilson (2003:280), there is no single perspective on philosophy of education. However, he then describes philosophy of education as ‘logical discipline which has great importance for the

theory and practice of education’ (Wilson, 2003:279). On the other hand, Siegel (2010:1) contends that philosophy of education is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with addressing philosophical questions about the nature, aims and problems of education. He further argues that it is a practical branch of philosophy, of which those who practise it draw from both the mother discipline, philosophy, and outward to education practice. Thus, according to Siegel (2010:4), a philosophical tradition, in general, considers education as a ‘worthy and important target of philosophical reflection’. This is the case in this research, which employs philosophical approaches to analyse and explore meanings of the principals’ instructional leadership roles, although pruned to practice

Soltis (1983:14) asserts that the form of contemporary philosophy of education, in general, is three-dimensional, namely the personal, the public and the professional space. These dimensions may have distinct ideas of philosophising about education matters, or one can proceed from one dimension to another when thinking about education issues. This is to say, one can approach an education concept from a personal dimension, but this can also lead to an exposure to a public domain, that is becoming engaged in education discourses. The other approach would be to integrate these three dimensions while engaging with an educational concept (Waghid, 2001:9). In trying to explore these dimensions so as to get deeper insights, I will refer to Soltis’s (1983) explication.

Referring to the personal dimension, Soltis (1983:15) argues that ‘having a personal philosophy of education is very important to mindful and meaningful educational activities’. For me, this means that, if one has applied one’s thinking from one’s own interests in pursuing deeper insights and understanding of educational matters this will lead to a clearer meaning of what it is to be a good teacher, an effective leader or an enthusiastic learner. Soltis (1983:15) argues that to be philosophical about education from the view of personal dimension is for ‘an individual to achieve a satisfying sense of personal meaning, purpose, and commitment to guide his/her activities as an educator’. The basic aim of the public dimension is to guide and direct the practice of many (Soltis, 1983:15). Soltis claims that this dimension offers anyone (philosophers, educators, policy-makers, politicians, journalists, etc.) the opportunity to be philosophical about education. According to Soltis (1983:15), the public dimension encompasses propositions that are intended for others to follow, ‘normative prescriptions’ or ‘critiques’ aimed at changing the current educational practice. He further justifies the reason for being philosophical about education in the public dimension, arguing that those who seriously care about education articulate public aspirations and educational values, while giving the ‘sense and purpose to the cooperative public enterprise’ of education and thereby providing the opportunity for thoughtful participation in education.

Moreover, Soltis (1983:15) argues that a significant feature of the public dimension is that, in the minds of many, including philosophers, it ‘takes precedence over’ both the personal and the professional dimensions. ‘Public philosophy is everybody’s business and it ought to be’ (Soltis, 1983:15). Turning to the professional domain, Soltis (1983:16) argues that this dimension incorporates personal and public dimensions into its own dimension. According to Soltis, this dimension presents the approaches and ‘technical tools’ of professional philosophers for dealing with conceptual and normative education matters. By ‘normative’ he seems to be referring to those education matters that concern a certain category of participants, say educators or researchers. Jacobs (2012:9) asserts that the professional dimension ‘provides specific guidelines for the practice of teaching’. In the case of philosophers, when operating as professionals in this dimension, their focus is more on analysing, reflecting, evaluating and pursuing a ‘clear understanding of educational matters’, rather than making proposals (Soltis, 1983:17). According to Soltis (1983:17), rather than focusing on doing educational tasks or trying to solve educational issues, philosophers are concerned with establishing the ‘logical soundness of arguments, explicating the meaning of ideas, justifying value claims, constructing reasonable arguments’, as well as providing ways to think about educational tasks and problems.

Philosophers of education participate as professionals when analysing or reflecting on educational issues, and their primary aim is to provide ‘illumination, understanding, and perspective to think with’, instead of ‘providing programs and policies for educators to act on’ (Soltis, 1983:17). Soltis further points out that this approach to philosophising allows for an educational enterprise to be ‘rationally self-reflective as possible by providing philosophically rigorous examinations, critiques, justifications, analyses, and synthesis of aspects of the educators’ conceptual and normative domain’. As implied by Soltis, this way of philosophising maximises the value of philosophy of education in educators and guides professional philosophers of education in their actions.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

South African school principals are responsible and accountable for the academic performance of learners. This stems, first, from the fact that managing teaching and learning is placed at the heart of the principal’s overall role at school level (Department of Education (DoE), 2008a; Bush *et al.*, 2009:162; Osakwe, 2016:176). Second, principals are considered to be key role players in improving learning and achieving educational outcomes in learning (Mestry, 2017:1). According to Naicker and Mestry (2016:1), the dark period in South Africa’s history due to poor academic performance in schools ‘challenges school leaders [principals] to bring about [positive] change in academic performance of learners’. This suggests that principals have a direct accountability in learners’

academic performance. In other words, the underperformance of learners can be attributed to principals' ability to lead and manage the school.

Moreover, Mokhele (2016:265) argues that principals have the power to promote 'school capacity'. She describes 'school capacity' as being evaluated by teacher knowledge, the professional community and project coherence. Consolidating this notion, Steele, Johnson, Otten, Harbel-Eisenmann and Carver (2015:128) stress that '(p)incipals have an important role in supporting teachers to effect systemic instructional change'. It can be seen from these two arguments that the principal's work impacts on teacher development with the purpose of improving instruction, and hence on the learners' academic performance.

Botha (2014:27) asserts that the principal's most important professional work is to ensure the effective fulfilment of his/her leadership functions. For him, principals who implement leadership responsibilities effectively lead effective schools. But the schools of those who do not have lower levels of academic achievement and thus are ineffective. According to Weeks (2012:6), effective schools – schools that are positive and productive – have built their culture of learning into the school's vision and mission. In the same vein, Bush (2007:1) contends that 'deciding the aims of the organization is at the heart of education management'. At school level, these aims are decided by the principal. This implies that, to some extent, principals are school managers and, to another, are school leaders. Bush further explains that these aims are influenced by the government's expectations, as they are stated in legislation and 'formal policies'. Concerning policies, Bhengu and Myende (2016:1-2) argue that policy changes have dramatically changed the way principals lead and manage schools. Moreover, Hoadley and Ward (2009:3) contend that 'policy around the roles of principals' is contested and somehow uncertain. Nonetheless, Mestry and Singh (2007:482) assert that principals must have insight into legislation and policy issues. Mestry (2017:1) cautions that 'principals must comply with education policies'. What I can gather from this discussion is that: 1. principals' roles are outlined in legislation and education policies; 2. principals' duties are or should be centred on improving teaching and learning; and 3. their roles are or should be aimed at improving the academic performance of learners and the educational outcomes, hence an effective school. According to Kruger (2003:206), there is a positive correlation between the 'instructional leadership role of the principal and the effectiveness of a school'. The important question is: what is/are this/these role(s) of principals' instructional leadership?

As a teacher, faced with the hostile situation of underperforming schools and high schools in particular, my quest turned out to be to understand principals' roles as instructional leaders. First, my

interest in understanding was from the standpoint of a selection of education policies and legislature. Second, it was to understand how high school principals from different school contexts articulate their role as instructional leaders. Hence, in this research I analysed how principals' roles as instructional leaders are articulated in the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) (Act No. 84 of 1996), the Education Laws Amendment Act of 2007 (ELAA), Act No. 31 of 2007 (Republic of South Africa, 2007), and the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (the Standard), 2015 version.

1.5 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research was triadic:

- To conceptually explore the roles of principals as instructional leaders as articulated in the relevant legislation and education policies;
- To understand how principals in different high school contexts articulate their roles as instructional leaders; and
- To explore high school principals' understanding of the effects of the articulation of their roles as instructional leaders on learners' academic performance.

Furthermore, to realise the aim of this research, specific objectives were elicited; these are:

- To explore and understand the meaning of instructional leadership
- To conceptually explore the roles of principals as instructional leaders as articulated in the SASA, ELAA, and the Standard
- To understand how principals in different high school contexts articulate their roles as Instructional leaders; and
- To explore high school principals' understanding of the effects of the articulation of their roles as instructional leaders on learners' academic performance.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Clarification of the key concepts in this research is in line with conceptual analysis, one of this study's research methods, as its main business is the clarification of terms or concepts. Further to this, Van Wyk, (2004a:153) asserts that conceptual analysis pursues the 'logically necessary conditions for the use of a word'. Moreover, the clarification of key concepts assists in orientating the reader to the meanings of the clarified concepts in relation to this research. The key concepts of this study are:

hermeneutics, instructional leadership, high school, roles, principal, academic performance, and leadership and management.

1.6.1 Hermeneutics

The word hermeneutics refers to the art of interpretation (Kinsella, 2006). According to Jacobs (2012:18), hermeneutics is concerned with text interpretation, and Ramovha (2009:14) agrees with this conception. Linge (1976:xx) describes the hermeneutical relationship between the text and the interpreter by saying ‘the hermeneutical conversation between the interpreter and the text involves equality and active reciprocity’. He further asserts that ‘[i]t presupposes that both conversational partners are concerned with a common subject matter – a common question – about which they converse’. Thus, the central concern of text interpretation is to uncover meanings and to gain understanding. According to Gadamer (1975:xx), the tradition of understanding does not only allow for the text to be understood, but ‘insights are acquired and truths are known’. In the hermeneutical conversation of the interpreter and the text, the interpreter openly listens to the text asserting its viewpoint (Linge, 1976:xx). The interpreter seeks to understand what the text says to him/her, ‘what constitutes its meaning and significance’ (Gadamer, 1975:333). The uncovering of meaning is made possible by questioning. The text poses questions to its interpreter and the interpreter asks him/herself questions so as to answer the question posed by the text, and he/she poses questions to the text (Gadamer, 1975:382). According to Gadamer (1975:383), ‘questioning opens up possibilities of meaning’, and the understanding of the meaning of a text is brought about by the understanding of the text under analysis as the answer to the question. Thus, hermeneutical conversation leads the partners in conversation ‘into a process of inquiry that has a life of its own and is often filled with developments that are unanticipated and unintended’ (Linge, 1976:xxii). Consequently, in hermeneutical inquiry, the text and the interpreter are together led by the subject matter, and understanding is marked by a shift in their (text and interpreter or researcher and the other) original positions (horizons). The hermeneutical approach to research views inquiry as a conversation (Kinsella, 2006).

According to Kinsella (2006), hermeneutics is criticised occasionally for its conceptually elusive nature. However, Linge (1976:xi) asserts that, in philosophical hermeneutics, what matters is what happens beyond our will and actions, and not what we do or ‘what we should do’. On the one hand, Gadamer (1975:xxix) points out that ‘application is an element of understanding itself’. For me, this means that one’s application of a concept is influenced by one’s understanding of that concept. An understanding of hermeneutics offers enrichment and deepening of the conceptual foundations of

qualitative research projects (Kinsella, 2006). Söhnge and Van Niekerk (2009:169) point out that ‘hermeneutical considerations are of the utmost importance to educational endeavours’. In my mind, hermeneutical considerations enable understanding.

1.6.2 Instructional leadership

Lynch (2012:17) notes that instructional leadership is ‘a catalyst for the promotion of teaching and learning’. Gowpall (2015:35) describes instructional leadership as the leadership of learning. According to Msila (2013:81), instructional leaders understand that the success of school leadership lies in supporting successful teaching and learning. Moreover, instructional leadership is not only strongly focused on the teaching and learning of learners only, but it also shows a lot of interest in the professional learning of teachers (Khumalo, 2015:26). The early model of instructional leadership regarded a school principal as the immediate decision maker, a supervisor that gives direction on almost every aspect of school activity (Lynch, 2012:17; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008:638). The DBE (n.d:1), in its *New Teacher Induction: Guidelines for the Orientation Programme*, points out that ‘[a] 21st-century principal’s primary responsibility is instructional leadership’. This assertion by the DBE forms the basic assumption of this research study.

1.6.3 High school

In the South African schooling system, a high school offers grades 8 to 12 (DBE, n.d:2). This is a post-primary education institution that works with learners between the ages of 13 and 18. High schools in South Africa provide formal education for five years, that is, from grade 8 to grade 12. At the high school level, learners are being prepared for higher education institutions (universities and colleges) (Masuku, 2011:24), or to join the workforce on completion of matric.

Moreover, South African high schools inherited a historical typology from the apartheid education system (Radebe, 2015:1-2; Christie & McKinney, 2017:9-12). According to Radebe (2015:1), the declaration of a number of Acts, including the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Coloured Persons Education Act of 1963, and the Indians Education Act of 1965, saw the exclusion of non-white races’ education from the then ‘governance of the mission churches’. For Radebe, the non-white races’ education was placed under state control but was further split into three classes. These education classes constituted those of the House of Representatives (Coloureds); the House of Delegates (Indians); and Bantu Education (black Africans).

According to Christie and McKinney (2017:9), in 1990, in the dying days of the apartheid education system, the government introduced a set of options for white schools. These options were categories ranging from A to C, from which schools were required to choose their status. Christie and McKinney (2017) say that these categories were referred to as ‘Clase Models’, named after the then Education Minister, Piet Clase. The Model A schools were completely private schools that received a state subsidy (Radebe, 2015:1). The Model B schools constituted government schools for which the state paid teachers’ salaries, while the school management together with parents decided on the admission policies (Radebe, 2015:1). According to Christie and McKinney (2017:9), Model C schools were ‘semi-private’ and ‘state-aided’. They were run by their management councils, and decided on school fees, staff appointments, and the maintenance of resources. The Model C schools also decided on their admission requirements subject to the government’s mandate to maintain the learner population with a majority of whites (Radebe, 2015:1; Christie & McKinney, 2017:9).

In 1992, according to Christie (2016:10), the government classified all former white schools as Model C schools. This means that all the other models were dissolved, and schools had to assume the Model C status of ‘semi-private’ and ‘state-aided’, with the majority of the learner population being white. After 1994 and the enactment of the South African Schools Act (SASA), Act No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), all ‘state-aided’ schools became ‘public schools’, and this was the cessation of Model C schools. However, Battersby (2004:280) remarks that the public still make use of the code ‘Model C’ when referring to the ‘historically white state schools’. Christie and McKinney (2017:11-12) concur with this notion, and further note that, when these schools are informally referred to as ‘Model C’, it indicates their historic association with ‘white privilege’; they are highly resourced and are the highest performing in the country.

Against this background, this research concerned itself with high schools of an ordinary public-school category as contemplated in Chapter 3 of SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This means that the high schools that participated in this research came from the category of the former white privileged schools and from those that evolved from the Bantu Education and unprivileged blacks-only schools.

1.6.4 Principals’ roles

I start this section by asking the question: what are roles? To answer this question, I draw on Getzels and Guba (1957:426), who assert that roles are delineated by means of role expectations. BusinessDictionary.com (2018) describes a role as ‘[a] prescribed or expected behavior associated

with a particular position or status in a group or organization'. Moreover, Getzel and Guba (1955:74) contend that a role is a 'set of complementary expectations involving the actor in his/her interactions with other individuals' in the organisation.

Therefore, roles, according to BusinessDictionary.com (2018) are '(j)obs or positions that have a specific set of expectations attached to them'. Getzel and Guba (1957:426) assert that roles represent the organisations' positions and offices, and are organisational 'givens'. Concerning the latter, Getzel and Guba argue that expectations are set with no reference to any specific individual who is serving or will serve in the position. For them, it follows that roles are independent of the person's (role incumbent's) perception. Thus, for a high school principal, roles denote the position or purpose that the principal holds or is expected to hold in a school (Iileka, 2017:22). Following these arguments, it appears that the roles of principals as instructional leaders are readily formulated in the relevant legislation and policies without referring to an individual principal. It is then upon the individual's assumption of the position as a principal that he/she must fulfil the said roles by mandate.

1.6.5 Leadership and management

The course manual, 'Understand school leadership and governance in the South African context', a module of the ACE: School Management and Leadership course, posits that leadership is about influencing others' actions with the aim of achieving desirable ends (DoE, 2008b:42). So, leaders are responsible for shaping goals and motivating others, while influencing their actions to achieve the set goals.

Management is described as the maintenance of 'efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements' (DoE, 2008b:42). In agreement with this notion, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge, and Ngcobo (2008:5) assert that management encompasses dealing with 'systems, structures, and the culture of a school for the day-to-day operations'. Furthermore, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:11) argues that managers are characterised as people who do things right, whereas leaders are people who do the right things. According to Naidu *et al.* (2008:5), the purpose of management in all areas of the school is to enable the creation and support of conditions under which high-quality teaching and learning can take place. It is mainly high-quality teaching and learning that account for the improved academic performance of learners – the desirable ends – in a school.

1.6.6 Academic performance

According to Peters and Biesta (2009:98) and Biesta (2009:6), the central purpose of education resides within its qualification function. For Reddy *et al.* (2015:1), concurring with Peters and Biesta, qualification constitutes the provision of knowledge, skills and attitudes to learners that will enable them to ‘do something’. For learners to be qualified or to be understood as having acquired some body of knowledge, skills and dispositions, they need to be assessed through tests and examinations; their performance scores will be mirrored against the standards determined by the Minister of Basic Education. So, the academic performance of a school can be identified as poor, good or outstanding, depending on how well the school meets the ‘minimum outcomes and standards and assessment procedures’ as set by the Minister of Basic Education (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is the principals’ standing responsibility that, at the beginning of every year, they draw up an improvement plan for the school’s academic performance for that year and submit it to the Head of Department (HD) (Republic of South Africa, 1996). For high schools, much emphasis is put on the matric academic performance. According to Taole (2013:77), the learners’ academic performance is always the priority, no matter what kind of leadership style the principal chooses. In this research study, the matric academic performance is used as the main measure of the school’s academic performance.

1.6.7 A high school principal

The term ‘principal’ refers to an educator who has been permanently appointed or is acting as a head of the school (Republic of South Africa, 1996). According to Christie (2010:698), the words principal and ‘headteacher’ mean the same thing. She further asserts that the designation of principals as ‘headteachers’ was used in the United Kingdom (UK), where management was favoured with reference to principals’ roles until the 1970s. Hence, principalship refers to headship with regard to schools. For Christie, headship, principalship and management are organisational concepts that designate structural positions that come with responsibility and accountability.

Furthermore, Christie (2010:695) notes that, in the schooling context, management, leadership, headship and principalship are used interchangeably, with ‘principalship’ being preferred in South Africa. I concur with Christie that, in the South African context of schooling, ‘principal’ and ‘principalship’ are commonly (or mostly) used to refer to a ‘head of school’ and his/her headship. However, in some instances, which for me seem to strongly emphasise the principal’s role position, both principal and ‘headteacher’ are used to reinforce each other. For instance, Naidoo, Mncube and Potokri (2015:321) link the responsibility of building a truly democratic society in South Africa to stakeholders’ commitment in creating democratic schools. They particularly charge the principal with this mission, noting that ‘... particularly the principal who is the chief financial officer, headteacher,

and administrator of the school'. The term 'headteacher' in Naidoo *et al.*'s (2015) assertion, suggests emphasis on the role position of the school principal to have accountability inherent in his/her, distinct from those of other stakeholders with.

From the colonial and apartheid days through the Model C era, the term 'headmaster' or 'headmistress' was used to designate the position of a principal in South Africa. For example, Christie and McKinney (2017:2) refer to the school's vision that was formulated by the school's founder and the 'headmistress' in 1902 which still informs the decision making at high school in Gauteng till 2016. The use of the term headmistress also appeared in a study done by McKinney in 2013 (cited by Christie & McKinney, 2017:14). The term 'headmaster' seems to have persisted to exist even long after the nullification of Model C schools and the end of apartheid. I draw this thought from the DoE's (2001:5) highlighting of instances of discrimination that were revealed by a study conducted by the South African Human Rights Research Council (SAHRRC) in Mpumalanga province in 1999 in some former Model C, House of Representatives House of Delegates schools. In the responses extracted from the study, the term 'headmaster' was used when referring to the school principal (DoE, 2001:9 & 45).

Lastly, BusinessDictionary.com (2018) describes the school principal as the manager and the 'biggest driver' of better educational outcomes, whose commitment and abilities are strongly correlated with the school's academic performance. The DBE further regards principals in their management capacity as key delivery agents of the education system, and the 'most important partners in education'. This suggest that principals, particularly high school principals, have a central role to play in the education system and in the communities in which their schools are based.

What I can gather from this discussion is that high school principals can be referred to as headteachers, or sometimes headmasters/headmistress in some varying contexts within South Africa. The position of principalship offers a set of ranging and complex roles whose significance cannot be overemphasised for the success of all learners in a school and the functionality of other stakeholders in education. Against this background, the term 'principal' in this study refers to the head of an ordinary public high school as contemplated in **Chapter 3** of SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

1.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provides the research orientation of the study, in which the introduction, the motivation for the research, the statement of the problem, and the aim and objectives of this research study have

been discussed. The introduction provides a brief discussion of the comeback of the instructional leadership role of principals. Providing justification from the literature, I briefly discuss the reasons why I undertook the study. Again, consulting the literature, I tried to link the status quo of poor academic performance in SA to principals' instructional leadership and its revival. I also provided a concise discussion of poor academic performance in mathematics, the so-called 'critical' subject, in the matric examinations and the ANAs in grade 9. I attempted to indicate the effects of poor performance in mathematics, such as a deprivation of essential skills, on the economy of the country. I then tried to trace the concern of education stakeholders, particularly in SA, about principals' instructional leadership in relation to academic performance in high schools. This was an attempt to sketch the context of this research.

The motivation for the research highlighted the background to my study. Since my study is located in philosophy of education, I employed conceptual analysis, the main method of this research, to explore the meaning of 'philosophy of education'. I then presented the statement of the problem, followed by the triadic aim of this research which focuses on determining and understanding the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. Lastly, I provided a section that clarifies the key concepts of my study.

1.8 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

Chapter Two provides a detailed discussion of the research procedures, research methodology and methods that were employed in this research study. This chapter also gives a detailed discussion of the sampling and selection of the policies that were analysed, and of the interviewees.

Hermeneutics, an interpretive approach, was the methodology of this research, so it is discussed comprehensively. I also provide a glance at other philosophical approaches to research, which could have been considered as possible lenses for this research had it not been for the ontological stance of my study. A point is made about why hermeneutics was a suitable methodology of this study. Then, the three research methods for my study, namely conceptual analysis, documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews, will be discussed.

Chapter Three conducts a comprehensive literature review aimed at exploring the role of high school principals as instructional leaders and thereby constructing the meanings that will guide my research study. Leadership and management roles, as assumed underpinnings of high school principals as

instructional leaders, are explicated. Lastly, a systematic overview of matric learners' academic performance is outlined.

Chapter Four focuses on the analysis of policies and interviews. I analyse the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders, as articulated in SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996), the Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) (Republic of South Africa, 2007), and the Policy on the South African Standard for Principalship (the Standard) (DBE, 2015c).

Chapter Five presents the findings, recommendations for possible future research, and the concluding remarks of my inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter delineates how the study is going to be carried out. It locates the research into a particular ‘world view’ as it cites the methodology that will be used to answer the research question. It also identifies methods that will be employed for data collection. In sum, it identifies both the researcher’s ontological and epistemological stance. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007:5) argue that ontological assumptions yield to epistemological assumptions, and they influence both methodology and methods considerations. Epistemology is concerned with theories of knowledge (Creswell, 2003:25; Schurink, 2009:807), while ontology refers to the theories of reality (Creswell, 2003:25; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:7; Schurink, 2009:807; Ngcamu, 2014:26;). Since education is a social phenomenon (Reddy, 2011:635), it follows that educational research ontology is concerned with social reality.

According to Reddy (2011:637), any educational pursuit is certainly a part of the physical, historical, and social process a researcher needs to understand in order to understand education processes. In line with this argument, I identify my research study as an educational pursuit which embraces the three aspects, the physical, historical and social processes. But, what is research? In my gleanings in research literature, I came across Ross (2005:1) who describes research as an ‘orderly investigation of a subject matter for the purpose of adding to knowledge’. Cohen *et al.* (2007:48, 49) adds that it is an ethical enterprise. According to Reddy (2011:639), education, like any field of profession, is defined by its ‘distinct body of knowledge’ that it develops and is responsible for. For him, this body of knowledge needs to have ‘deliberate theorising’, rigorous, and have a continuous reconceptualisation for the field to remain relevant and vibrant. Reddy further points out that research provides for such ‘space and tools’ to participate in an inquiry that will produce a body of knowledge to sustain education as a distinct field.

On the other hand, Bridges (2017:21), quoting Peters and White, argues that in academic circles, the term research refer to ‘systematic and sustained inquiry carried out by people well versed in some form of thinking in order to answer some specific type of question’. According to Bridges, for a research to be a ‘sustained inquiry’ calls for a serious type of commitment that is underlined by ‘intellectual virtues of patience, industriousness, thoroughness, and care’. This suggests the expected attitude of a researcher towards conducting research, to work tirelessly, reading and listening

carefully, and to show commitment from the beginning of the research journey to the end. The second requirement of research is that it must be 'systematic'. Bridges (2017:21) contends that this requirement advocates for a 'system of inquiry' that requires the researcher to have concerns of how comprehensive or representative is the collected information, and how orderly it was collected and stored. For Bridges, it must also be found worthy of a research status in terms of how thorough the research was, the care and accuracy in translation or transcription of the information. From this, it follows that research, according to Bridges (2017:21) is a 'rule-governed activity' which expresses the need for a relationship between 'evidence, analysis, and interpretation'. The descriptions of 'research' provide essential details about conducting research.

Furthermore, Bridges asserts that the relationship continues to speak to the 'ways in which inferences are drawn' and the ways outcomes of the 'new inquiry may or may not confirm or refute previous sets of beliefs'. The research must prove to be a rule-governed system of inquiry in deciding about the kinds of claims that can be supported by a particular evidence or argument. Lastly, research as a rule-governed inquiry must be systemic about the level of confidence with which it 'entitles one to hold a certain belief' (Bridges, 2017:21).

Then, what is educational research? In my attempt to answer this question, I refer to Cohen *et al.* (2007:48) who argue that educational research is a systematic and scholarly application of principles to problems of teaching and learning within the formal educational framework and to the clarification of issues that have a direct or indirect bearing to teaching and learning. Research is a social practice (Le Grange, 2002:36). Further to this, Le Grange (2002:36) suggests that if educational research approaches observe the ontological and epistemological stance, which are philosophical underpinnings to research processes, then research will 'enable us to interact and transform society'. What I draw from these arguments describing research and educational research is that: it is inquiry based; the inquiry itself must show a sustained care and thoroughness; and it is a rule-governed system of inquiry. These qualities for research account for its recognition within and outside the academic research community.

Although this research is as a result of my personal interests to understand high school principals' roles as instructional leaders, it may have a potential to transform a reader's thinking or raise some questions. Bridges (2017:2) claims that educational research is a 'contested terrain'. Thus, being systematic is the key.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

I begin this section with a question: What is a research design? I refer to Schurink (2009:803) who literally describes research design as a plan that guides how the researcher will ‘execute a particular study from identifying the topic to interpreting the results’. Expanding on this notion, in his presentation “Research design and methods: Post-graduate enrolment and throughput”, Van Wyk (n.d.) argues that research design ‘articulates what data is required’; what methods are going to be employed to collect data; what methodology will be used to analyse data; and how ‘all this is going to answer the research question’.

This study follows a qualitative research design. According to Schurink (2009:803), a qualitative research design should be handled as a process in which every decision is based on the researcher’s assumption on how truthfully the research question can be answered. Schurink further notes that assumptions, which include methodological approaches, guide the researcher’s actions. Therefore, a qualitative research design sets ‘markers, parameters and tools’ that assist the researcher in the research process (Schurink, 2009:804).

Moreover, Schurink suggests that it is vital that the research process is considered to be a reflexive undertaking. By reflexive he seems to mean that the researcher continuously analyses all the decisions and reflect on every action taken during the research process. According to him, this will provide the researcher with ‘better understanding of the phenomenon’ under inquiry. It appears that the reflective action of the researcher throughout the research process is one of the means of ensuring trustworthiness and validity in a qualitative research knowledge production. I draw this idea from Schurink’s (2009:804) assertion as he argues that ‘...our work can be understood, not only in terms of what we have discovered but how we have discovered it’. For him, reflexivity allows the researcher to be transparent of his/her beliefs and values, certainly, that has an influence on the study and its outcomes, as a researcher is inclusively engaged in the research at all stages. Concurring, Creswell (2003:5, 8) further provides a structure of a research design in sequential and itemized form, namely, research question(s); the theoretical lens (methodology); data collection (which implies research methods); data analysis; and ‘write-up, and validation’. Thus, in the next section, I provide my research questions.

2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Remenyi and Prince (2005:232), finding a relevant research question is a significant part of the whole research project. They provide a list of attributes of a research question, namely, that it needs to be of ‘direct interest to the researcher and/or to his/her supervisor’ and it must be expressed in a clear and unambiguous manner. Most importantly, I think, is that it must be ‘based on the real problem recognized’ in the field (Remenyi & Prince, 2005:232-233). I coined my research questions based on my direct interests. The following are my research questions:

The main research question is:

- How do relevant statutory documents, education policies, and principals from different high school contexts articulate principals’ roles as instructional leaders?

And the research sub-questions are:

- How are high school principals’ roles as instructional leaders articulated in relevant education policies?
- How do high school principals from different school contexts articulate their roles as instructional leaders?
- How do these principals understand the effects of their articulations of their roles as instructional leaders with regard to learners ‘academic performance’?

Schurink (2009:815) cautions that since research questions ‘form the backbone of the research design’, they need to be clearly aligned to the research methodology; sampling or the identified research context; and the methods of data collection and analysis. For me, all these aspects of research, as mentioned by Schurink, are directly influenced by the researcher’s choice of the research paradigm. In the next section I explore the research methodology, then I will briefly discuss my research paradigm.

2.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In my BEd Hons course (Education Research module) I found it very challenging to distinguish between methodology and method. At first, I thought they were the same, one can decide which one he/she prefers. When I learned that they were different, I went as far as knowing that one of the two was a ‘technique of data collection’, but still I could not identify whether this description referred to the method or methodology. At times, the word ‘tool’ was used with the phrase ‘data collection’, instead of ‘technique’. Now it was like between method and methodology one is a tool and the other one is a technique. Because I did not have any background knowledge of research, I wondered which one was important for research.

Le Grange (2009:191) considers drawing a difference between methodology and method as useful. This suggests that methodology and methods are distinct concepts. So, what is a method and what is methodology? I refer to Le Grange (2009:191) who describes the method as ‘techniques of gathering empirical evidence’ while methodology is the ‘theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework guiding a particular research project’. Le Grange further notes that methodology can be viewed as the theories that underlie the method. I found this insightful. I also considered Schurink (2009:817) who argues that methodology is ‘a theory of how inquiry should proceed’. He further notes that a ‘commitment to a particular methodological frame of reference’ has a specific influence in the study and informs the inquiry in specific ways.

These arguments made me realise that, first, method and methodology are distinct research concepts. Secondly, although they are both important for a research, methodology informs the choice of method and guides its use. It shapes the research questions, informs and guides the researcher’s actions from identifying the problem, through data collection, that is, how he/she interacts with data sources. It also guides data analysis and informs how results are reached and reported. For Jacobs (2012:17), research methodology is a converging point of the method, theory and epistemology in the process of conducting a social inquiry, she further regards it as a paradigm. Creswell (2003:4) concurs with her. I therefore consider methodology to shape the way how we think throughout the research.

My next question is: what is a paradigm? According to Neuman (2000:65 & 2014:96), the term paradigm ‘means a basic orientation to theory and research’. He further asserts that ‘a scientific paradigm is a whole system of thinking’. For him, it comprises the ‘basic assumptions’, the important question to be answered, the research methods to be used for data collection, and what counts as a good scientific research (Neuman, 2000:65). Regarding Neuman’s assertions, I understand Jacobs when she views methodology as a paradigm. On the other hand, Creswell (2007:19) views paradigm as a researcher’s worldview which further shapes the inquiry. He then describes it as a ‘basic set of beliefs that guide action’. For Creswell (2003:6, 2007:19), paradigms include philosophical assumptions, epistemologies and ontologies and broadly conceived research methodologies. In consideration of these arguments, a paradigm seems to determine and is determined by the researcher’s philosophical stance.

Further to this, Creswell (2007:19) argues that paradigms used by qualitative researchers differ with their set of beliefs that they bring to the inquiry. Now, what is qualitative research? Neuman (2003:139) argues that qualitative and quantitative research differ in several ways. For him, one difference between the two is observed in the nature of data they produce shaped by different

methods. According to Neuman (2003:139, 141), a quantitative research works with ‘hard’ data which is in the form of numbers; it emphasises objectivity and employs statistical approaches for data analysis. These approaches concentrate on measuring, quantifying, reading intensity or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:4), whereas qualitative research makes use of ‘soft’ data presented in the form of words, sentences, impressions, photos, and symbols; thus, emphasises trustworthiness (Neuman, 2003:139, 141). Thus, Denzin and Lincoln (1994:2) describe qualitative research as being ‘multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter’. For them, qualitative researchers study phenomena in their ‘natural settings’ with an intent to interpret these phenomena ‘in terms of the meanings people give to them’. As such, Creswell (2007:39) argues that qualitative researchers maintain a focus on understanding the meanings that the participants give to the problem, and not the meanings that they bring to the inquiry. Therefore, he regards qualitative research as an interpretive inquiry.

Moreover, Creswell (2003:8, 2007:19) describes paradigms within qualitative research as postpositivism, constructivism/interpretivism, participatory, and pragmatism. On the other hand, Neuman (2003:68-87, 2014:96-110) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994:99-103) provide examples of research paradigms (be it qualitative or quantitative) such as positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. Neuman describe these as the meanings of methodology. Further, Denzin and Lincoln argue that a paradigm consists of three significant aspects, namely epistemology, ontology, and methodology.

In the next section, I discuss three research paradigms or the philosophical schools of knowledge production that are applicable to educational research, in order to paradigmatically locates my study. The paradigms that I explore in the next section are positivism, critical theory, and interpretivism, and I consider their significant aspects.

2.5.1 Positivism

According to Neuman (2014:96), positivism is generally viewed as a natural science approach. Historically, positivism is traced back to the French philosopher of the nineteenth-century, Auguste Comte, the founder of sociology (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:9). He is recognised, according to Cohen *et al.* as the first thinker to use the term ‘positivism’ for a philosophical stance (Neuman, 2014:97).

The positivists’ ontological view is that reality is ‘out there’, stable, with ‘pre-existing patterns that can be discovered’, and is self-imposed to individuals’ consciousness (Neuman, 2014:98,104,121).

A positivist researcher plays a role of an observer of the reality and the observation must be analysed such that it can be expressed as a general law (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007:10). As implied by Ngcamu (2014:26), positivists' assumption is that there is only one reality or truth. For positivists this is a discovered, valid, and single truth about the social reality under investigation (Neuman, 2003:72).

The positivistic epistemological assumption is that knowledge is 'hard, objective, and tangible' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:7). In agreement, Opie (2003:7) argues that in their objective stance, positivists' knowledge must be established on demonstrable facts or observations. Thus, the researcher must perform an observer's role (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:7) when studying a social phenomenon. This means that the researcher's conscious feelings (Opie, 2003:7), experience or values have no place in the inquiry process, rather he/she must remain separated from the phenomenon of inquiry for the knowledge to be genuine (Kabende, 2015:32). In a positivist worldview, this is an ethical practice for researchers (Neuman, 2014:310). The observable knowledge is acquired 'out there' by a positivist social researcher, and since this knowledge is not fluid, rather it is hard, it can be tested to give empirical evidence. Thus, a positivist researcher embraces the empiricist's methods of what is a valid knowledge, observability, testability, and provides empirical evidence, so that a particular interpretation can be derived (Opie, 2003:7). The empirically good evidence, for a positivist researcher, is observable, accurate, and has no traces of theory and values (Neuman, 2014:108). Moreover, the positivist approach proceeds from deductive reasoning (Neuman, 2014:195). Their deterministic claim is that 'events have causes and these can be discovered (Opie, 2003:7), thus, they hypothesise the problem under investigation. The positivism paradigm employs quantitative methods consisting of large data sets. These quantitative methods include surveys, experiments, and statistics (Neuman, 2014:97). For me, this means that events and causes become the independent and dependent variables to be tested in the experimental investigation. Observations will establish the relationship between the two variables, so that based on their relationship general laws can be formulated. Thus, using the general laws they can regulate or control and make predictions of human behaviour (Neuman, 2014:182; Opie, 2003:7; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:11, 27). The general law becomes a covering explanation of the human behaviour with no considerations of the variations of contexts to which people naturally live.

The aim of my study is not to formulate a general law expressing the behaviour of high school principals as instructional leaders, but to understand their roles. Therefore, a positivist approach cannot be appropriate for my study.

2.5.2 Critical theory

The critical theory developed from the work of the Frankfurt school in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994:1; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:26; Waghid, 2004:10; Neuman, 2014:110). The paradigm of critical theory in educational research was significantly influenced and advanced by Jürgen Habermas, from its early major thinkers like Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:26; Waghid, 2004:10; Rush, 2004:1, 7; Jacobs, 2012:32), to mention just a few. According to Ingram (1990:xxv) critical theory's aim is to enlighten people with regard to their rational interests in 'creating a just and happy society'. This means that critical theory does not only study a social phenomenon for understanding or to get deeper insights, but rather, it is after changing the social situation under inquiry that has been interpreted and accepted as normal.

Concerning social reality, critical researchers share some sentiments with positivist researchers (Neuman, 2014:111). According to Neuman, critical theory researchers believe in an empirical reality that exists independent of the researchers or the participants' perceptions. In my reflection, critical theory research involves action, it means that its knowledge is observable; its ends are emancipation, this suggests a testable outcome. However, critical theory's ontological stance assumes a 'critical realist ontology' (Neuman, 2014:111). For critical realists, reality consists of three levels namely, the empirical, which can be observed using senses; the real, unapparent, deeper and non-permanent structures that a researcher needs to uncover and modify; the actual, these are the causal mechanisms of what we experience at the empirical level and is unobservable as it develops from deeper levels and may lie inactive but surfaces overtime (Neuman, 2014:111). It appears that, for critical theory, to understand the phenomenon under inquiry is ordinary and is not enough. Thus, critical theory researchers link the pursuit of educational research with politics and policy-making (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:3). Most often than never, these causal structures are hidden in language (Jacobs, 2012:37).

Critical theorists use the term 'praxis' which indicates that 'explanations are valued when they help people understand the world and take action that changes it' (Neuman, 2014:115). Its central ideas are enlightenment and emancipation. Its ends are to realize a society that is free from oppression or subordination, living a life that is founded on democracy and equality for all its members (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:26). Put simply, its epistemological stance is emancipatory. Thus, its methodologies include ideology critique and action research (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:30). So, critical theory paradigm is not relevant for this research study. My interests are not to problematize the roles of principals as instructional leaders, perhaps, yet, but to get deeper insights into the concept.

2.5.3 Interpretivism

According to Neuman (2014:103), the origins of the interpretivist paradigm are associated with Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist and a German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). For Neuman (2014:103), Weber's belief was that 'personal reasons and motives that shape' individuals' internal feelings and influence their decisions to act in a particular manner must be studied. While, for Dilthey the search for meaning is based on an 'empathetic understanding' of the everyday lived experience of people in specific contexts (Neuman, 2014:103).

The central project in interpretivism is to 'understand the subjective world of human experience' (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:21). The purpose of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the phenomenon under inquiry from the individuals' point of view (Mafuwane, 2012:80). The main concern of the interpretive paradigm are individuals (Cohen, 2007:21) or groups, hence Weber is referred to as an 'ontological individualist' (Waghid, 2004:6). Thus, the ontological stance of an interpretivist paradigm is that reality is multifaceted (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:20, 22). According to Cohen *et al.*, human actions are as diverse as the 'situations and contexts supporting them'. He further notes that human behaviour and events are 'situated activities' and are highly affected by context. I understand Cohen *et al.* here as saying that one cannot express human actions as a general law, nor expect human beings to respond the same way to a single situation that confronts them. It stands to reason that the suitable place for meeting with the high school principals would be their high schools. Secondly, I cannot expect the same articulations by high school principal of their roles as instructional leaders. They are different individuals from different backgrounds, and their schools are in different contexts. This also applies to the interpretation of documents by an interpretive researcher. The meanings of the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders that I construct may not be expected to be the meanings that another researcher may construct when analysing the same documents. Researchers of this paradigm acknowledge that their interpretation is influenced by their 'personal, cultural, and historical experience' (Creswell, 2003:8-9). The researcher's context mediates meanings.

The epistemological viewpoint of the interpretivist paradigm is that knowledge or reality is socially constructed (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:27; Ngcamu, 2014:26; Neuman, 2014:105; Wellington, 2015:26). On the one hand, Opie (2003:7) asserts that knowledge belongs to "individuals as a result of their consciousness and thoughts". The interpretivist approach regards individual's point of view, thoughts, and collective opinions as central to knowledge production. As such, the interpretive approach assumes a subjective standpoint to knowledge construction. Creswell (2003:9) contends that researcher's aim is to interpret the meanings that individuals have about their world. For me, this

simply means that the researcher gains insights from the subjective relationship he/she establishes with research participants in the process of meaning making. Notably, Opie (2003:9) points out that “there are no benefits in working with large data sets”, while Mafuwane (2012:81) notes that the interpretive paradigm “uses small samples”. Furthermore, the epistemological view of the interpretive paradigm acknowledges that reality changes continuously (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:20; Schurink, 2009:809). Thus, for an interpretivist paradigm knowledge is fluid and infinite, and the researcher explores perspectives.

Interpretivism embraces a number of approaches (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:20) such as phenomenology, pragmatism, and hermeneutics (Waghid, 2004:5; Neuman, 2014:103). Pragmatists knowledge claim that ‘what is true is what works’ (Waghid, 2004:7; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:70). With phenomenological research, it is central that the researcher frees him/herself from ‘all preconceptions about the world’ or from the usual ways they use to understand the world – a reduction approach (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:22). Neuman (2014:103) describes hermeneutics as ‘a theory of meaning’ and is associated with the interpretive paradigm. Driven by my interests to understand the high school principals’ roles as instructional leaders, it was after reading with understanding that I firmly located my study in the interpretive paradigm, with hermeneutics being my methodology.

Regarding this discussion on different paradigms, I draw from Lukenchuk (2013:6) who notes that educational research can be located in various philosophical traditions of inquiry, therefore, understanding paradigms incorporated in the educational inquiry is necessary. Next, I discuss hermeneutics, the methodology of this study, to gain a deeper understanding.

2.6 HERMENEUTICS

I begin this section by answering the question: what is hermeneutics? The word hermeneutics refers to the science or art of interpretation (Linge, 1976:24; Jacobs, 2012:18; Lukenchuk, 2013:123). On the other hand, Neuman (2014:103) provides a literal meaning of hermeneutics as to ‘making the obscure plain’. While Van Niekerk (n.d.:36) claims that it is the science of understanding. The hermeneutics etymology as recorded by Madu (1992:4-5) and Lukenchuk (2013:24) shows that hermeneutics originated from a Greek word ‘hermeneuein’ which means ‘to interpret’. The word ‘hermeneuein’ is associated with the Greek god messenger, Hermes, whose duties was to convey messages to and from Zeus (Linge, 1976:98; Lukenchuk, 2013:24) and to communicate the desires of gods to humans (Neuman, 2014:103).

The development of hermeneutics in the eighteenth century is credited to Friedrich Schleiermacher (Silverman, 1991:1; Lukenchuk, 2013:25). However, it is Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who endeavoured to shape hermeneutics to be a tool of knowledge production in social science and politics, realizing the impossibility of producing an objective knowledge in the sphere of human realm (Kinsella, 2006; Lukenchuk, 2013:25). The other momentous thinkers in the philosophy of hermeneutics are Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) (Silverman, 1991:1; Lukenchuk, 2013:25).

In my pursuit of knowledge about hermeneutics, I came to an understanding that from the earliest writers to the latest, Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics is the art of text interpretation. According to Neuman (2014:103), text can be in written word, conversation, or pictures. Boshoff (2007:16) drawing on Cohen *et al.*, notes that ‘hermeneutics focuses on interaction and language; it seeks to understand situations through the eyes of the participants ...’. For Neuman (2014:103), usually text meaning is not obvious, a hermeneutical reader carefully reads to discover deeper and richer meanings entrenched in the text. He further argues that the ‘reader brings her or his subjective experience to the text’. It simply means that researchers are not supposed to free themselves of their preconceptions but bring them into hermeneutical research. I was enlightened in my reading to find that contemporary hermeneutists have distinct models of the philosophy of hermeneutics (Silverman, 1991:63). Below, I briefly discuss Paul Ricoeur’s, African, and Gadamer’s hermeneutics.

2.6.1 Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics

Ricoeur, a French philosopher, advocates for epistemological relevance in hermeneutics (Silverman, 1991; Bobb, 2012:163). Ricoeur’s criticism of Heidegger and Gadamer for deserting the epistemological enterprise (Silverman, 1991:65) shows his inclination to epistemology. Thus, Ricoeur stresses that with regard to human sciences, philosophical hermeneutics ‘must serve an epistemological function’ while incorporating critical practice into discourse (Silverman, 1991:63). Ricoeur’s attention as it stands, is on ‘legitimate methodological’ concerns of human sciences that focuses on epistemology. As recorded by Söhnge and Van Niekerk (2009:169), Ricoeur claims that ‘hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts’. For Ricoeur, a text is a discourse that is ‘fixed by writing’ (Söhnge & Van Niekerk, 2009:169; Jacobs, 2012:26). To understand the text, Ricoeur believes that to some extent the interpreter needs to distance him/herself from it and must assume a position of ‘critical self-understanding’ (Van Niekerk, n.d.:41).

According to Silverman (1991:63, 68), Ricoeur insists on a ‘reflective distance’ as a linguistic object. Ricoeur strongly believes in the dialectic text and the interpreter. He claims that ‘textual meaning and psychological meaning differ’ (Söhnge & Van Niekerk, 2009:170) and for him the distance is automated. According to Söhnge and Van Niekerk (2009:170), this reflective distance for Ricoeur is also a condition of interpretation. Thus, Van Niekerk (n.d.:41) describes Ricoeur hermeneutics as “critical hermeneutics”.

Although Ricoeur is clear about the divide between the text and its interpreter, his idea about Gadamer and Habermas hermeneutics is that hermeneutics of tradition and the critique of ideology need each other (Van Niekerk, n.d.:41). Therefore, his work attempts to resolve the Habermas-Gadamer debate. So, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics assumes a complementary approach (Silverman, 1991:65-66; Van Niekerk, n.d.:41; Jacobs, 2012:26). In his quest of epistemologically relevant hermeneutics in human sciences he sees rigour in natural sciences, ‘explanation’ (Silverman, 1991:65). In his hermeneutics, Ricoeur incorporates the methods of semiotics (interpreting signs and symbols) and structural linguistics, hence the text becomes the object of linguistic explanation (Silverman, 1991:65). Furthermore, Van Niekerk (n.d.:41) contends that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics seeks to ‘integrate understanding and explanation into a systematic theory of interpretation’. For Ricoeur, there is an inevitable dialectical relationship between understanding and explanation; he claims that explanation is not only the possibility for human sciences, but for an interpretation to be valid it must capture an ‘explanatory moment’ (Silverman, 1991:66). Ricoeur’s ‘self’ is not constructed by history, rather it seems to be a self-understanding that is attained through reflective tradition or ‘critical objectification of the text’ (Silverman, 1991:66-67).

For me, this implies that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics has no concern of the text’s historical context as an aspect of interpretation and understanding. I cannot imagine a situation where I exclude the different contexts of the high schools or the historical context of documents that I analyse, this is where meanings are rooted. Thus, Ricoeur’s hermeneutical approach to the understanding text is not relevant to this study.

2.6.3 Hermeneutics in African philosophy

I begin this section by asking: What is hermeneutics in African philosophy? Before I attempt to answer this question, I find it necessary to give a brief background of my first encounter with education philosophy in my BEd Hons course in 2016. First, having been a mathematics and physical sciences teacher, it was not easy for me to comprehend the positivistic approach criticisms, truth

ought to have concrete evidence or can obey physics laws. This was my position. However, when it came to interpretive approaches we did in the Education Philosophy module, their processes connected with my African background, the notions of ‘history is primary, and the individual is secondary’ (Waghid, 2004:9). For me, this module offered me an opportunity to reconnect with my African philosophy.

Perhaps, the first question here should be: what is African philosophy of education? In my attempt to answer this question, I came across Waghid (2004:127) who gave a distinction between African philosophy of education and Africana philosophy of education. According to him, the former is an ‘activist philosophy of education’ whereas the latter is a ‘positive Africana philosophy of education ... that appropriates values such as freedom, autonomy and human rights, truth and scientific knowledge, justice and fairness ...’. I was enlightened. In consideration of the diverse African cultures, Van Wyk and Higgs (2004:203) argue that ‘despite diversity’, Africans have a deep cultural unity underlying the apparent ‘cultural heterogeneity’, and it results into ‘contents of indigenous African knowledge systems’. Among the concepts that African philosophy writers reiterate in their writing are community and Ubuntu, culture, and the critiques of Western Eurocentric forms, either of the form of knowledge or of an individual or a construction of self (Owolabi, 2001; Waghid, 2004; Van Wyk & Higgs 2007; Van Wyk, 2004:164, 180; Higgs, Van Niekerk, and Van Wyk, 2010:141; Waghid, 2016). It was insightful to understanding that African philosophy has distinct philosophies of education.

Returning to the first question, I refer to Fayemi (2016:7) who claims that ‘in an African philosophy, the concept of hermeneutics refers to the methodology of achieving a deeper understanding of materials such as symbols, culture, language, and history through a detailed interpretation’. He further contends that hermeneutics is a method of understanding some ‘lost ideas’ by carefully interpreting the ‘socio-historical background’ in which they were produced. Owolabi (2001:154) agrees with this notion and he further describes it as the ‘means of returning to the ancient truths of mythologies’. In regard to philosophy, Fayemi asserts that hermeneutics allows philosophy to connect ‘cultures and peoples’. Moreover, he points out that hermeneutics is an interpretive tool of ‘mediating, rationalizing, and dialoguing’ between philosophy and the non-philosophical parts of people’s culture. Ramose (2015:551) refers to the non-philosophical as the ‘reality’. In the same light, Feyemi (2016:7) argues that as a methodological paradigm in African philosophy, hermeneutics will assist to form a medium of ‘understanding cultures and of seeing the rich pluralism as well as the basic compatibility of cultures’. Lastly, Fayemi drawing from Okere, asserts that African philosophy as the hermeneutics of African culture, ought to undertake interpretation that needs to be ‘mediated by an

individual, his/her culture, tradition, environment, personal experience, and history'. What I can gather here is that hermeneutics in African philosophy is trusted with the task of recovering the lost non-material treasures that make African cultures unique, and how an individual ought to be as an African. Hermeneutics offers appropriate processes to interpret and understand the ways of life that sustain the commonality of cultures, communalism, ubuntu, culture, context and understanding each other across cultures.

2.6.4 Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics

According to Gadamer (1998:xxviii), hermeneutics means interpretation. Jacobs (2012:18) argues that hermeneutics is concerned with text interpretation. On the other hand, Lukenchuk (2013:123) describes hermeneutics as the art of interpretation. He adds that, hermeneutics developed from interpreting the biblical text to the 'illumination of human understanding'. As described by Van Niekerk (n.d.:38), hermeneutics' matter of concern are those situations where we 'encounter meanings that are not immediately understandable but require interpretive effort'. The question is: how does one exercise an interpretive effort to expose meanings?

In an attempt to answer this question I refer to Gadamer (1975:xxxiii) who argued that 'being that can be understood is **language**'. Thus, language makes understanding possible. For me, this means that both literally and contextual language of the text are crucial for understanding. For Gadamer (1975:xxxi), 'understanding is achieved in the form of language. About understanding, Gadamer (1975:186) argues that 'to understand means to come to an understanding with the other'. Moreover, he contends that to understand each other is always with respect to the subject matter (Gadamer, 1975:187). According to Lukenchuk (2013:124), hermeneutics as the art of interpretation it 'unites the art speaking and the art of understanding', meaning that its sense of purpose pairs language and meaning. He further claims that it is in conversation that language gains its authentic life.

Consequently, Gadamer points out that a text interpreter must treat a text as 'Thou' (Gadamer, 1975:xxii, 187). Silverman (1991:64) and Gadamer (1998:xxx;) also confirm this assertion, and Silverman says that the text should be regarded as the 'other' who co-exists with the interpreter. It means that the text interpreter must interact with the text as the second person that he/she is engaging in a dialogue with. According to Van Niekerk (2002:234), 'sincere interpretation is the outcome of a dialogue between text and interpreter'. A dialogue differs from a debate in the sense that in a dialogue the discussing partners are consciously looking for the strong points in the arguments of their discussing partners, rather than searching for weak points as is the case in a debate (Van Niekerk,

2002:234-235). The text as the other that an interpreter is participating with in a dialogue in search of meaning and understanding, it has something to say to its interpreter, that is, it asserts its meaning or truth about the subject matter as a partner in a dialogue (Gadamer, 1975:xxxii-xxxiii,282; Gadamer,1998:xxx; Silverman, 1991:64; Van Niekerk, 2002:235). According to Cubukcu (2012:110-111), the interpreter of text must 'remain open' to the meaning presented by the text in the dialogue, as it presents itself with all its otherness and asserts 'its own truths against one's own fore-meanings' (Gadamer, 1975:282). Stressing on the notion of 'openness to the text', Gadamer (1975:282) points out that 'a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something'.

A dialogue that an interpreter and a text get involved in, takes a form of a question and answer conversation. As put by Gadamer (1998:xxx), dialogue partners are engaged in 'questioning together about the truth of the subject matter they are discussing'. Expanding on this Gadamer (1975:187) argues that the art of conversation takes off by presenting an 'argument, question and answer, objection and refutation' and if there is no grasp of meaning the conversation is paused. This shows the dynamics movements of the dialogue or conversation. Gadamer makes an important point when he asserts that this brings about the awareness of the other's individuality and uniqueness. This suggests that when the conversation recommences there will even be more attentiveness and perhaps rearranged questions of clarity, for me. Gadamer (1975:187) asserts that the text interpreter or the other in the conversation should ask a reflective question 'how did he come to such an opinion?' For me, this question seeks to understand with the other, and it offers a possibility of a broadened interpretation in the hermeneutical sense. Alternatively, the conversing partners may ultimately attain a 'common language and a common judgment in an imperceptible and non-arbitrary transfer of view-points' (Van Niekerk, 2002:235). Thus, understanding has been achieved. Gadamer (1975:xxxviii) states that 'being that can be understood is language' should be viewed in this light, rather than in the sense of language grammar.

Secondly, although Silverman (1991:1) claims that Gadamer continued the hermeneutic tradition initiated by Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Heidegger, he specifically revived and advanced the ontological problem set forth by Heidegger (Silverman, 1991:1; Van Niekerk, 2002:229; Lukenchuk, 2013:23-24). Van Niekerk (2002:229) describes the ontological problem as the problem of 'being of beings'. According to Gadamer (1975: xvii, xxxiv), Heidegger used the word 'Dasein' which is translated to 'existence' or 'human being' when he described the concept of understanding as the universal limitedness of Dasein. Lukenchuk (2013:124) concurs with this assertion and he points out that Heidegger focused on "Dasein" which means the 'the mode of being human' or 'the situational meaning of a human in the world'. The fundamental ontology has its foundation in Dasein which is

concerned “with being” (Gadamer, 1975:256). According to Van Niekerk (2002:229), the ontological problem is the most fundamental problem of all philosophical problems. He describes the philosophical problem as ‘the problem of the way of being for that being whom its being is to understand being’. This, for me, emphasizes the business of philosophy: philosophizing the non-philosophical (Ramose, 2015:551) that is ‘being’. It further suggests that humans think and interprets the world they find themselves in order to understand how to be. Moreover, Van Niekerk (2002:229) argues that the philosophical problem gives rise to the ontological question which in turn results into hermeneutical question.

Thus, Van Niekerk (n.d.:28) argues that ‘the central question that underlies’ Gadamer’s hermeneutics is the ‘**hermeneutical question**’. Gadamer (1975:xxvii) phrases the hermeneutic question as how is understanding possible? He points out that this question leads the way to all endeavours of understanding. According to Van Niekerk (2002:229), the hermeneutical question is the most important philosophical question. This suggests that the basic effort in interpreting text for understanding begins by asking the hermeneutic question. The process of Gadamer’s hermeneutic interpretation proceeds by asking a question from the text and read the text in search of a response to a question (Silverman, 1991:64). For Gadamer, central to interpretation is an understanding of the ‘question that the text presupposes’ (Silverman, 1991:64). This describes how one is supposed to read a text for interpretation and understanding.

The other important aspect of Gadamer’s hermeneutics in the process of understanding is the ‘**fusion of horizons**’ (Gadamer, 1975:xxx, 386, 406; Gadamer, 1998: xxiv; Van Niekerk, n.d.:40; 233); Cubukcu, 2012:111; Lukenchuk, 2013:125; Kabende, 2015:40). A horizon as described by Gadamer (1975:313) as ‘the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular’ standpoint. Now the important question is: what is the fusion of horizons? According to Gadamer (1998:xxvi), the partners in dialogue are conscious of their own limits and of the effect that history has on them and can have their conversation or dialogue. This means that the conversational partners are aware of their prejudices and their historical horizons. Seemingly, the prejudices and the impacts of history on the conversing partners form horizons, thus, distinct horizons. I make a point of “distinct” as Gadamer “1975:xxxiii) contends that the dialogue or conversation becomes more productive if the partners’ ‘initial prejudices’ differ (Gadamer, 1998:xxx). For Gadamer, we do not renounce our prejudices, but we put them at risk by bringing them into play in the conversation.

Thus, on horizons in the case of the text and the reader, Van Niekerk (2002:233) asserts that one horizon is formed by the context through which the text emerged. The second horizon is the context

formed by the researcher's 'interpretive possibilities, concerns, and questions' (Van Niekerk, 2002:233). Again the researcher is conscious of his/her personal interests and questions (Gadamer, 1975:xxix) that form a driving force for them to interact with the text or participate with the other in a dialogue. Hence, the movement of the dialogue which constitutes question and answer, argument, and refutation culminates to the fusion of the horizons. The fusion of horizons, for Gadamer (1975:386) that happens in understanding is 'actually the achievement of language'. Thus, a constructed meaning. So, understanding is marked by a disappearance of the two autonomous horizons and replaced by a single inclusive horizon. The researcher's horizon is broadened, he/she gains understanding and can judge differently based on the acquired prejudices. Cubukcu (2012:113) points out that it is in the context of historically effected consciousness 'that one makes wise judgements'. What is a historically effected consciousness?

Van Niekerk (2002:232) argues that the researcher 'cannot divorce' him/herself (historical horizon) when they embark on the tradition of interpreting a text. Gadamer (1975:385) acknowledges that the text does not speak to its interpreter as a 'Thou' (other); but for a reader who has a quest to understand something he/she must make it speak by asking a question and anticipate for an answer from it. It is made to speak through interpretation (Gadamer, 1975:415). This implies that for a researcher who is in pursuit of knowledge asks motivated questions. Motivated by past experiences or history of effects (Gadamer, 1975:384) and by the quest to understand. Which then means that, for Gadamer, the interpreter 'is part of tradition' as he/she regards him/herself as being addressed by the text. Gadamer (1975:385) guarantees that this is the truth of a '**historically effected consciousness**'. Then, the act of understanding for the researcher becomes a reciprocal relationship that arises from the conversation and is historically mediated. He further emphasizes that a historically experienced consciousness, characterized by renouncing the illusion of 'perfect or absolute enlightenment' (Linge, 1976:94), is open to the 'experience of history'. Linge (1976:25) the conversational partners must search for a mutual understanding and together find it. On the one hand, Gadamer (1975:417) asserts that 'understanding and interpretation are bound together'. When the text speaks it gives an answer to the person who questions it and poses its questions to him/her who answers it (Linge, 1976:57). This dynamic dialogue is said to have accomplished understanding when the text's response coincides with the interpreter's own language. Linge (1976:57) claims that 'to understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a dialogue'. This brings about an enlightened understanding and it completes a **hermeneutic circle** by adding new knowledge (Lukenchuk, 2013:125).

What is a hermeneutic circle? Lukenchuk (2013:124) refers to two types of hermeneutic circles. The first one is Schleiermacher's which Gadamer (1975:xxxii) calls it the hermeneutic circle of 'whole

and part'. According to Lukenchuk, this hermeneutic circle gives a principle of movement in understanding a phenomenon, saying that a whole can be understood through its parts, and the parts can be understood in terms of a whole. For me, this means that a researcher cannot claim that he/she understands a phenomenon if they have only studied its parts, the circle is incomplete. Similarly, one cannot concentrate on understanding the whole yet to draw conclusions that involve the parts. To exemplify this, in this study, the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders represent a whole which consists of parts, the school context (culture, prejudices, environment, socio-economic factors). Therefore, the understanding of the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders (whole) is to understand it in terms of its particular context (the parts) and vice versa.

The second hermeneutic circle stems from Gadamer's hermeneutics. In Gadamer's perspective, understanding develops from the previous or existing understanding (Van Niekerk, n.d.:41). Understanding tradition needs a 'historical horizon' (Cubukcu, 2012:111) it results from a dialogue between the past and the present, from a constant mediation of the two (Gadamer, 1975:xxx; Linge, 1976:xvi). According to Lukenchuk (2013:124-125), hermeneutic circle in Gadamer's hermeneutics means that 'the researcher shifts between his or her own horizon of understanding and the meaning of the text as well as between the researcher questioning the text and the questions that emanate from it'. Lukenchuk (2013:125) further asserts that understanding is revised continuously on the basis of the realized experience. This is also true in the sense that a text has no fixed meaning, we understand it on the basis of its context (Gadamer, 1975:184) and our own historical horizon. For me, this implies that even the same researcher whose horizon has been transformed (Linge, 1976:xxxi) in a different encounter with the same text he/she will find different assertions as they will be moved by different questions. For Lukenchuk (2013:25), horizons of a moving person keep changing. The hermeneutic circle 'never comes to an end as that would mean perfect understanding' which is impossible with human beings (Van Niekerk, n.d.:41-42). This means that, in my understanding, although the fusion of horizons marks the event of understanding it also opens new grounds for further pursuit of wisdom. This discussion has highlighted the important elements of Gadamer's hermeneutics which are the language of meaning, the fusion of horizons, the historically effected consciousness, and the hermeneutic circle. These elements seem to make up stepping stones in the whole journey of hermeneutical inquiry. This research study employs Gadamer's hermeneutics as the research methodology to study the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. Consequently, below I make a point, briefly, of Gadamer's hermeneutics in this research.

2.6.5 The point of Gadamer's hermeneutics in this study

I consider Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophy of hermeneutics to be a suitable methodology for this research. As pointed out earlier, hermeneutics is associated with interpretivism and their common aim is to attain an in-depth understanding from a qualitative data, of how people create or give meanings of their own world in their everyday life. Thus, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics guides the interpretative inquiry in this research. It enables me to understand the concept of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders in relation to the context in which SASA, the Standard, and ELAA emerged historically. As Linge (1976:9) contends: 'history is only present to us in light of our futurity'.

The concept of the fusion of horizons clearly articulates the process of interpretation and understanding in regard to text. That is, I need to read the text carefully, interact with it as though I am engaging in a dialogue with the other, at the same time remain open to its assertions with the intention to be taught something by it. Our conversation (text and I) goes by question and answer. Gadamer (1975:282) makes a point that the text presents itself 'in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings'. Understanding is realised when the text response is the answer to the interpreter's question, that is, they together have found the meaning, the two horizons who were initially autonomous and different are integrated to form one inclusive horizon. This is insightful for a first timer like myself in the activity of text analysis.

Furthermore, knowing that my prejudices which form my present historical horizon are a precondition for understanding, guarantees safety in questioning. Meaning that my limited horizon that I have acquired as both a student and a teacher (my history of effect) will be transformed and widened as it is integrated with that of a text and of my participants respectively, promises learning. Besides that, this aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics promises safety for both partners in the dialogue it also speaks of trustworthiness of the whole undertaking of this research project. Moreover, the high school principals' articulations of their roles as instructional leaders are understood in relation to the context of each high school. Since Gadamer's philosophy of hermeneutics is context specific.

Additionally, the logic of Gadamer's hermeneutic circle allows for a continuous self-reflection and projection, while continuously revising the initially projected meaning in relation to what emerges from the text (Gadamer, 1975:279). This offers an advantage of a circular movement; a researcher can always verify his/her understanding. Hence, Van Niekerk (n.d.:42) argues that there is no finality in hermeneutics, but the 'rigorous study of texts and contexts' contributes 'to conclusions that are trustworthy, albeit not final...'.

Of the different philosophical hermeneutics that I have discussed in this section, none of them had the affordances that will enable me to answer my research question and meet my interest to understand the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders.

2.7 RESEARCH METHODS

First, methods are said to be techniques and procedures that are used to collect data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:47; Owen, 2013; Wotela, 2017:227) for empirical evidence (Le Grange, 2007:442). This is a general and frequently used definition and is associated with the positivist model, which implies quantitative kind of data (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:47; Punch & Oancea, 2014:3). For me, considering the terms like 'techniques', 'procedures', and 'empirical evidence' they do suggest empiricist background. However, Le Grange (2000:192) argues that 'neither method per se' can be clearly distinguished as quantitative or qualitative research methods. He further asserts that it is only in the epistemological assumptions' level where the choice of method is guided by the epistemological questions that one needs to address. Similarly, Punch and Oancea (2014:16) contend that we decide on the methods of inquiry based on assumptions about the nature of the reality to be studied, and the epistemological assumptions about the reality under inquiry. For me, it seems like one's philosophical position about the reality under inquiry informs the nature of data that can best present the phenomenon to be studied.

Thus, Cohen *et al.* (2007:47) describes research methods as a range of approaches that are employed to collect data for analysis and interpretation in educational research. For Cohen *et al.*, these approaches range from participants observation to interviewing. Therefore, to answer my research questions, I employ **conceptual analysis**, **documentary analysis**, and **semi-structured interviews** as my methods of data collection where conceptual analysis is the basic method for this study. When addressing the question of a connection between research questions and methods, Punch and Oancea (2014:26) argue that different research questions need different methods to answer them, and the way that questions are stated imply what needs to be done to answer them. Next, I discuss the three research methods starting with conceptual analysis.

2.7.1 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

What is conceptual analysis? To answer this question, I refer to Jacobs (2012:41) who asserts that conceptual analysis is a philosophical method which its approach to a problem is to break down the 'key concepts' pertaining to the problem in question. Put differently, Sytsma (2010:4) claims that it

is concerned with the articulation of primary meanings of the concepts of philosophical interest'. This suggests the delineation of concepts by considering the basic terms that constitute them. On the other hand, conceptual analysis allows for the exploration of constitutive meanings of a concept or phenomenon (Van Wyk, 2003:152). For Van Wyk, to clarify terms or concepts and/or to understand their use is a philosophical activity. In light of these arguments, I, therefore, find conceptual analysis to be a potential tool to explore multiple meanings of the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders, to clarify concepts, and to analyse text in SASA, ELAA, and the Standard. It will assist me to construct meanings for my study which will bring about the understanding of the concept under inquiry. Thus, I begin this conceptual analysis exercise by analysing 'conceptual analysis' in the next section.

2.7.1.1 What is a concept?

Since its origins in of the mid-sixteenth century a 'concept' has been associated with thought and imagination (Stevenson, 2010:360). One may argue that dictionaries go by definitions which is not the case in philosophy and for me as a researcher with a philosophical stance, but this background made sense to me. The very concepts 'thought' and 'imagination' that are linked to the word concept, for me, suggest abstract activities of the mind rather than practical endeavours.

I then came across Janz (2015:482) who analyses the concept of 'dialogue'. He describes concepts as having provenance and 'terroir'. By provenance, he argues that he does not only consider the place of origin and the history of the concept although these do make a provenance of a concept. Rather, he takes cognizant of the hands a concept has passed through and the work that concept has done as bearing traces on that particular concept. For him, considering the hands that a concept has passed through implies the exploration of the history of ideas, while considering the work that it has done 'implies looking for the traces of use and different senses a concept has developed in the present; senses which rely on the specific applications of a concept in the past'. Janz (2015:483) points out that although philosophy, at times, tend to homogenise concepts, taking their provenance as 'irrelevant to their meaning', he illustrates the relevance of the concept's provenance using a piece of art and dialogue. For a piece of art, he asserts that the narratives of the 'historical ownership and the circumstance of the piece of art is part of the art itself'. Regarding dialogue, Janz contends that this concept is often traced back to Socrates which makes it assume a pedagogical method which is scarcely used in philosophical inquiry, where it is viewed as a condition for the possibility of text or concept production. What I can understand here is that concepts have their provenances, but their use

is subject to change with different contexts in which they are used, although they may still possess the hints of their provenances.

Therefore, for the key concept of this study, the principals' roles as instructional leaders bear a differentiated provenance. Firstly, it is in the sense of its history of origins – United States of America (USA). Secondly, its provenance as in policy developments aimed at addressing the question of principals' roles as instructional leaders in SA schools with the purpose of improving learners' academic performance. The contexts in which this concept manifests its uses are the different high schools identified for data collection in this study. Then, how roles of principals are conceptualised, it is upon each school context and the understanding of the provenance (in this case education policies) of the roles of principals as instructional leaders. For Janz (2015:482), the concept's *terroir*. He describes a concept's *terroir* as 'the ground from which it springs, and which gives it its unique character'. He makes an example of 'wine' that it will have a unique 'characteristics and flavour' because of the soil of its production (Janz, 2015:483). He also claims that *terroir* exceeds the geographical limits to embody culture and ideas. The point is, for me, high school principals enact their roles as instructional leaders in a multi-level context (Weber, 1985:11).

I also considered Hirst and Peters (1998:29) who make it a matter of self-evident conception that a concept is 'not the same as an image'. They use the word 'punishment' to illustrate that concept and an image are two distinct aspects. Hirst and Peters argue that one can have a concept of punishment and not necessarily having a corresponding picture in his/her mind, say, of a 'criminal being hung, or a boy being beaten'. Thus, they point out that to be able to use the word 'punishment' correctly is to have a concept. For them, to have a concept is to be able to use a word in relation to other words. Again, using the word punishment, they note that one can relate the word 'punishment' to other words, such as, 'guilt' in which expressions like 'only the guilty can be punished', can be made. Hirst and Peters claim that it is the ability to relate words to each other that would make one to 'recognize instances in which the word applies. For me, this means that it is the ability to have a concept that would enable one to discern how and where a word is applicable.

Furthermore, Hirst and Peters (1998:29) argue that one can make a distinction between things or even group items together without having any word to draw differences or similarities between them. They, therefore, ask a question if in such a case we then say this person has no concept. They also give two life examples where words are not in use (both verbally and in writing) in the case of animals and early life of children. They note that animals make 'quite complicated discriminations', and children behave quite differential to their mother at an early stage of their lives without using any word. Then,

do we deny that animals have any concept or children have no concept of their mother until they can use words? For them, it seems like to have a concept is usually restricted to having a word or words to express that concept. Hirst and Peters ask another question if ‘would it not be better if we say that our possession a concept is our ability to make discriminations, and to classify things together if they are similar?’ They further argue that the ability to appropriately use a word is a ‘sophisticated’ and a very convenient way of discriminating and classifying things together if they are similar. Thus, for them, the use of a word to discriminate or classify things is a sufficient condition to have a concept, though it is not a necessary one. Meaning that it is not a satisfactory condition to conclude that to have a concept is equivalent to being able whether to use words appropriately or to classify and discriminate. According to Hirst and Peters (1998:30) both these abilities appear to suggest a grasp of a principle that enables us to perform these exercises. They note that to have a principle is the most fundamental thing in possession of a concept. Therefore, Hirst and Peters conclude that to have a concept encompasses ‘both the experience of grasping a principle and the ability to discriminate and the ability to use words correctly’. Van Wyk (2004:5) concurs with this claim, and he argues that if the two conditions can be satisfied the concept under analysis would be exposed. Next, I discuss analysis.

2.7.1.2 What is analysis?

Hirst and White (1998:3) assert that it is through analysis that we can come to know the meaning of any proposition. Snowdon (2008:112) argues that analysis is viewed as the central task of philosophy. Expanding on this, Hirst and White (1998:10) assert that analytical philosophy was revived in the 1980s and it became the part of a standing tradition of philosophy and a revitalising powerful force within it. This suggests that analysis plays central role in philosophy.

Of what significance analysis is in philosophy? To answer this question, I refer to Daniels (2012:11) who claims that analysis of concepts is key to understanding and in addressing philosophical questions. Hirst and Peters (1998:30) ask a question ‘what do we do in philosophy when we analyse a concept?’ They answer this question by first pointing at the nature of the concept of analytical concern, that it is usually the one whose possession is associated with the ability to use words appropriately. I found this illuminating and I listened closely as my horizon was about to be broadened. Hirst and Peters described that when we analyse a concept ‘we examine the use of words in order to see what principle or principles govern their use’. They point out that if we can make ‘these explicit we have uncovered the concept’. I gained insight, the event of understanding happened, and a new horizon was formed. Seemingly, to analyse a concept is to make a proposition of the

principle that govern the use of words that relate to that concept in question. Concepts as they are, that is, before analysis, are covered by implicit use of words and the use of those words is not a random activity, it is governed by a principle.

Furthermore, Van Wyk (2004:5) argues that questions of analysis are often linked to questions of justification. Waghid (2001:37) illustrates the activity of searching for necessary sufficient conditions for understanding and justification of the use of the concept of education. He argues that ‘for human practices to sustain the excellent practices’ of what is produced they need virtues, the internal goods to their practices. Furthermore, Waghid (2001:38) claims that it is one of the ‘central goods intrinsic to education practices’ to engage in practices of education as ‘a bearer of social identity’ in the virtues, and traditions of thought and action that encompasses education. Waghid points out that if we are to attain the ‘moral virtues’ such as honesty, wisdom, and judgment, to list but few, it is not sufficient to be conscious about the ‘extrinsic goods’ of education like promotion and more others. I understand Waghid as giving the principle that underlie an excellent participation in education as positive human and social values and an identity of a social order. This analysis provides justifications of an excellent practice in education say as a teacher.

According to Waghid (2001:39), ‘justifying for the use of concept, in this instance of education, is to search for the logically necessary conditions which not only concern the extrinsic ends of education but also connected to characteristics of its intrinsic good’. For me, this means that using the extrinsic good to justify ones understanding of the concept of education is not a sufficient condition. Thus, Hirst and Peters (1998:30) contend that when one attempts to make explicit of the principles behind the use of words to get a clearer understanding of concepts, ‘it is important to distinguish logically necessary conditions from other sorts of conditions that may be present’. Implying the ‘other sorts of conditions’ Strawson (1974:106) speaks of the ‘non-committal descriptions’ that fall ‘short of the identifiatory or classifiatory needs of the situation’. Regarding the analysis of concepts, this would be the conditions for the use of words that stop short of uncovering the concept, resulting in uncertainties about the understanding of the concept.

This exploration of the concept of ‘analysis’ for me, it justified the point made by Snowdon (2008:112) about analysis as being ‘the central philosophical task’ while referring to Strawson’s words who distinguishes ‘analysis’ as a ‘conceptual equipment’. He also cautions that ‘to fully understand our conceptual equipment, it is not enough to know ... how it works’ but one must also understand why it works the way it works. It all comes to what Van Wyk has pointed out earlier that questions of analysis are linked to questions of justification. Hirst and Peters (1998:34) concur with

this assertion. Therefore, for this study, the analysis of the concept of the roles of principals as instructional leaders will proceed by considering how this concept relates to other concepts and searching for meanings for its use.

2.7.1.3 Understanding conceptual analysis

According to Strawson (1974:140) conceptual analysis is the medium of interaction of concepts and the 'inevitable method of philosophical clarification'. Consequently, Waghid (2001:11) views conceptual analysis as an investigative tool of philosophy of education. He further contends that he employed it in his study to gain 'clarity about how educational matters are and what should be done in the realm of education'. Thus, drawing from Waghid's contention, conceptual analysis will help me to gain clarity about high principals' roles as instructional leaders, of which instructional roles of a principal is an educational matter. It will assist me to gain understanding or to come to a clearer answer of the questions about what constitutes high school principals' roles as instructional leaders. Put differently, what words or concepts are used in relation to principals' roles as instructional leaders. According to Hirst and Peters (1998:29), 'to be able to use word appropriately is a sophisticated and very convenient way of doing ...'. This suggests that if I can relate a concept to other concepts or words appropriately, then I would have exercised a cultured and convenient way of doing. Hirst and Peters (1998:32) also point out that 'concepts can only be understood in relation to other concepts'. This means that, when analysing education policies, I will be searching for concepts associated or used to describe principal's roles as instructional leaders. Moreover, when participating with the high school principals in interviews, I will be listening carefully to the words they use as they articulate their roles as instructional leaders; what concepts in their articulations relate to their roles as instructional leaders. Thus, conceptual analysis will enable me to establish a set of concepts that are used in relation with the concept, which is one way of uncovering the concept, high school principals' roles as instructional leaders.

Further to this, Hirst and Peters (1998:32) suggest a way of doing analysis of concepts which is by examining the meaning of words. For me, this implies that relating words or concepts with other concepts is not an irrational activity but rather it is the one that involves searching for the meaning and understanding of the words one is relating. They also argue that to do this we consider the meaning of words 'within their denotation and trying out suggestions about their defining characteristics'. Giving this as an example of what Socrates did, taking different cases and trying out suggestions like 'Justice consists in giving any man his due', 'justice is the interest of the stronger'. By doing this, Hirst and Peters argue that we progressively making 'explicit the links between words

that reflect on our conceptual structure'. Considering this example, it becomes obvious that uncovering the meaning of a concepts takes a deliberate searching of the relations that exist between the words and/or concepts. Again, it becomes clear that some words will not give satisfactory meaning of a particular concept when one takes the context into account. Thus, Hirst and Peters (1998:32) argue that '(b)ut we must also pay attention to what we mean by using a word in the sense of the job that we conceive of the word as doing in the context in which we employ it'. They caution that '... words are more like tools', they perform specific jobs in social life. These arguments cast light in the sense that when one is doing conceptual analysis he/she cannot extract the concept and search for its absolute meaning, for its meaning is viewed through the context in which it is used. Then, I cannot expect to have a general meaning or definition of the roles of principals as instructional leaders, rather its meaning is context-bound. Hirst and Peters (1998:33) contend that concepts are indissolubly linked to the social life of a group. Waghid (2001:20) concurs with this notion and expands it to say understanding the use of a concept comes by 'locating it within the social context that gives it meaning for a particular people, at a particular time and place ...'. Therefore, multiple contexts give rise to multiple uses of a concept, hence, its multiple meanings. Then, conceptual analysis helps me to explore multiple meanings that are ascribed to high school principals' roles as instructional leaders.

It is after one has gained a clearer understanding of a concept that he/she can ask other philosophical questions. So, analysing the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders clarifies my own understanding of the concept, but it also paves a ground for asking a moral or an ethics question about the roles of principals as instructional leaders. Hirst and Peters (1998:35) reiterate that philosophy is concerned with the second-order type of questions, such as morality, religion, and other such human activities. That is, understanding the meaning of concept help us to recognize the moral good or identify what is of ethical service while we apply them in our own situations.

For this study, the analysis of the concept of the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders is done by conducting, first, a literature review. This will help me to gain clarity on how the concept of principals' roles as instructional leaders is conceptualised; guide the construction of multiple meanings from the literature regarding this concept. Then, what justifications can be supplied along with the way it is used. To get a clearer understanding of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders, requires answering of these questions. Hirst and Peters (1998:35) argue that, the inability to come up with a coherent set of logically necessary conditions (meanings for my study) for the use of a word do not necessary mark one's failure. This makes the analysis journey safe.

2.7.2 DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

Documentary analysis is one of the two supplementary methods of this research study. The reason for employing documentary analysis is that I analyse policy documents, such as the SASA (Act No, 84 of 1996), the ELAA (Republic of South Africa, 2007), and the Standard (2015). Therefore, a clearer understanding of documentary analysis as a tool for data gathering is necessary if this study is to collect a sensible data from these listed documents. Keeping the understanding of the concept of analysis from the previous discussion, below I intend to briefly explore the concept of document by answering the question: what is a document?

2.7.2.1 What is a document?

Punch and Oancea (2014:203) describe a document as a medium that stores text. According to Wellington (2015:208), normally the word ‘documents’ encompasses a range of media and modes of presentation. On the one hand, Mogalakwe (2006:222) contends that a document is an artefact consisting of inscribed text as its central feature. For him, it simply means that a document is a written text. He also argues that documents are produced by individuals and groups based on their everyday practices. Put differently by Cohen *et al.* (2007:204), documents are interpretations of events; they are as results of social interaction, and ‘must be studied in their context, in order to understand their significance at the time’.

Punch and Oancea (2014:201) claim that for education and social research, documents are rich sources of data. They argue that documents may systematically compile and retain ‘a distinguishing feature of our society’ which then becomes a ‘vast array of documentary evidence’. For me, this notion can relate to the SASA (Act No. 84 of 1996) which marks the event ousting of the racially differentiated education system which was a norm under the apartheid regime, and it denotes the establishment of a single inclusive education system that belongs to the people of South Africa.

Documents are classified as primary either secondary sources data sources (Mogalakwe, 2006:222; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:194; Wellington, 2015:208-209). Documents that are considered as primary sources of data are those that carry ‘a first-hand account of an event’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:194) such as interviews’ transcripts, wills, letters, paintings, films, maps and laws (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:194; Wellington, 2015:208). On the other hand, secondary sources are those documents that do not contain an original data, they have an indirect relationship with the ‘event being studied’; examples include textbooks, encyclopaedias, and quoted material (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:194). Cohen *et al.* describe these

sources as those in which ‘the person describing the event was not actually present but has obtained the descriptions from another person or source’. He also points out that this kind of sources are of limited worth because of errors that result when information is passed from one person to another. This discussion of primary and secondary sources has shed light and I have gained understanding particularly for my writing in this study, and for future reference. It made sense to me why my supervisor has cautioned me always of over-using secondary referencing in my writing. Now, I understand. Although Cohen, *et al.* also note that the importance of stressing the use of primary sources is welcome, but the value of secondary sources should not be minimized. However, Punch and Oancea (2014:201) argue that secondary sources are of unnoticeable measure, they portray an observer being removed from the event or phenomenon being studied. It simply means that a documentary researcher should try to limit the use of secondary data where possible.

Additionally, documents are categories as public, private, and personal (Mogalakwe, 2006:223; Punch & Oancea, 2014:202). Mogalakwe gives examples of public documents as including government publications such as Acts of Parliament, policy statements, and reports on commission of inquiry. On the other hand, private documents are those produced by private sector business, trade unions, and private individuals; they include minutes of meetings, board resolutions, and annual reports. Whereas, personal documents include medical reports, photo albums, and suicide notes.

Notably, Wellington (2015:208) asserts that documents are subjects of systematic research. He points out that, document analysis for a particular educational research may be the main focus or be a complementary data source. While Mogalakwe (2006:222) contends that they can be used as a supplementary method. In the same light, Cohen *et al.* (2007:201) argue that documents are useful in providing more visible the phenomenon under inquiry. According to Punch and Oancea (2014:201), a researcher may choose from the range of documents, be it those that produce qualitative data like personal notes, or quantitative data, like statistics, or those that are online, such as blogs. This means that depending on the research question which mostly informs the type of data that would be suitable for analysis. Now that I have gained insights on what a document is, I turn my attention to understanding documentary analysis.

2.7.2.2 Understanding documentary analysis

Documentary analysis is basically described as the analysis of documents to gather facts (Owen, 2013:11). Although I am not in favour of the word ‘facts’ in this contention as it suggests a positivist kind of knowledge production, where the belief is that knowledge is out there waiting to be

discovered. I tend to understand Owen as saying that documentary analysis is concerned with constructing data from documents. I then, considered Mogalakwe (2006:201) who asserts that ‘the use of documentary methods refer to the analysis of documents that contain information about the information we wish to study’. Moreover, Wellington (2015:214) points out that a document does not possess a single ‘objective inner, essential meaning’. As such, Owen (2013:11) further contends that in their own right documents provide a field for research and are to be observed as situated, collective social products as they are produced in social settings. On the other hand, Punch and Oancea (2014:201, 204) argue that in education research, of which policy analysis is an example, documentary data sources are utilized as reliable data sources. This implies that documentary analysis as an instrument of data collection provides information about educational phenomena being studied. Thus, the point is documentary analysis is a viable research method to study educational phenomena. It is as good as other research methods and can be more cost effective (Mogalakwe, 2006:221).

Wellington (2015:215) asserts that documentary research proceeds from the principle that ‘no amount of analysis will discover ... a hidden, essentialist meaning’. Linked to this notion is the caution that documents should not be taken at ‘face value’. This means that document analysis goes by the way of interpretation rather than accepting a literal meaning of the text in the document. The researcher needs to engage with the text in a conversation of seeking the meaning together. According to Owen (2013:11), a document’s full potential is hardly tapped. This simply means that analysing a document is not an exhaustive exercise; documents have multiple meanings as a relevant text to one’s inquiry will keep on responding to different questions that the reader is posing. Wellington (2013:215) remarks that analysing a document “is a matter of interpretation”. Considering these arguments, documentary analysis appears to be a hermeneutic exercise (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:203; Wellington, 2015:215). According to Cohen *et al.* (2007:202), to uncover the meaning documents must be studied in their context. They advise of some questions that outline the documents’ context which include: what is the document? Where did it come from? When was it written? What were the political and social contexts surrounding the document? On the one hand, Wellington (2015:215) claims that analysing a document requires an interpretive understanding. By this, he means that the reader must explore the underlying hidden meaning of a text in order to gain a deeper understanding. In regard to education research, Wellington cautions the practical analysis of a document should encompass both literal reading and interpretation; considering the document’ context, authorship, intended audiences, intentions and purposes, vested interests, genre, style and tone, and presentation and appearance. A hermeneutic approach in documentary analysis was employed in this research to analyse the purposively selected documents.

2.7.2.3 Limitations of documentary analysis

Mogalakwe (2006:224) indicates that although each data source has a different approach, all data cases require a scientific treatment. Locating documents pose questions of authenticity of a document. Authenticity and the origins of documents requires a special attention from the researcher (Mogalakwe, 2006:222; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:203; Punch & Oancea, 2014:202). For Mogalakwe (2006:224), authenticity of a document is linked to the questions of genuineness and originality of the document; while its origin is concerned with its authorship (Punch & Oancea, 2014:202). In the case of authorship, Mogalakwe (2006:225) advises that when the researcher is using government documents that are written by civil servants and signed by a minister he/she must take the names inscribed in the document as authors. According to Mogalakwe (2006:225), the authenticity of data for any research, is the fundamental criterion that needs to be confirmed prior to analysis.

The other limitation of documentary analysis is the issue of reliability of documents. Reliability may refer to the credibility of the document, that is, its accuracy and sincerity (Mogalakwe, 2006:224; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:203; Punch & Oancea, 2014:202). These encompass the biases, forgeries, errors, and being selective in expressing the accounts of events. These limitations if they are not taken care of by the researcher may despair the process of analysis and interpretation of the document. Cohen *et al.*, (2007:203) advise that to authenticate the document's reliability by corroboration should be followed and that researchers should confirm and declare the standards and criteria of a document's reliability. Thus, the documents that I analyse in this study fall under the category government publications. Therefore, to ensure the reliability of each document I set the following standards and criteria:

- Each document must be an original copy and the appropriate version,
- Each document is accessed directly from the DBE's website online.

The other key questions that pose limitations of documentary analysis are document's representativeness and meaning (Mogalakwe, 2006:224; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:203; Punch & Oancea, 2014:202). About the document's representativeness, Cohen *et al.*, (2007:203) argue that this includes the availability and the survival of the documents of its time. While Punch & Oancea (2014:202) assert that representativeness of a document refers to whether the document is 'representative of the totality of documents of its class'. For me, this suggests that the document the researcher is using as a data source can be viewed as a sample of the population of documents that emerged in the same

historical time and addressing a social phenomenon though it may be in different areas; then, the document can be accepted as authentic.

Concerning the document's meaning, which Punch and Oancea (2014:202) describe it as the intended meaning of the document. I understand this as indicative of what the document was meant to address. Wellington (2015:215) refers to this meaning as the literal meaning. Mogalakwe (2006:227) agrees with this description and describes this literal meaning as a 'face value' meaning. I agree with Kabende (2015:55) who claims that 'there may be difficulty in establishing the literal meaning of documents'. However, in my view, some documents bear titles that are indicative of their surface meaning. For example, her study, 'A conceptual analysis of institutional culture at a Namibian university'. Literally, for me, this document stored the message of the examination of the institutional culture of a certain Namibian university. Another factor of documents' limitation is the interpretive meaning. According to Mogalakwe (2006:27) for the interpretive meaning, the researcher needs to understand the text in the document in relation to the context in which it was produced. The consistency of the history of effects that resulted in the documents under examination and the text propositions mark the authenticity of the document. For example, in this study one of the documents that I analyse is the SASA, in its preamble it draws our attention to the achievement of democracy, the consignment to history 'the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation'. It points to the national system that will redress the past injustices. Then, considering the history of times when SASA emerged it relates to the language of meaning in its text.

2.8.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

According to Owen (2013:9), for policy research almost all probable sources of information, ideas, and data sources 'fall into two general types: documents and people'. I find this assertion to apply in this study. The documentary data is complemented by a data collected from a small scale of semi-structured interviews. I conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with three high school principals. My interview questions will be in three forms namely, the pre-stated (organized and written down), the follow-up questions and probes (Owen, 2013:10). According to Taole (2013:78), semi-structured interviews allows for flexibility for both the researcher and the respondent. It seems like semi-structured interviews create a situation of optimum participation for both parties. This will assist me to grasp insights and understanding of how high school principals from different contexts articulate their roles as instructional leaders which is one of the purposes of this research.

2.8.3.1 What are semi-structured interviews?

According to Wellington (2015:138), interviews are ‘a conversation with a purpose’. For him, interviews in a research are meant to ‘probe’ a participant’s views or perspectives, therefore, ‘the exchange is far more in one direction than the other’. King and Horrocks (2010:40) make a distinction between a probe and a prompt. They argue that a probe is a follow-up question that encourages the participant to expand on the preceding answer aimed at digging deeper in the response. Whereas, prompts are more of intervention questions that seek to clarify what information is required especially if participants show signs of uncertainty about the question they are responding to. On the one hand, Wellington (2015:147) argues that prompts are sort of leading questions, for example, ‘do you mean that high school principals ...’, and he cautions that prompts may result in biases. Coming back to interviews, Wellington (2015:139) emphasises that the research interview’s function is to provide participants with a platform, give them a voice, an opportunity for their perspective views to be heard and ultimately to be read. According to King and Horrocks (2010:37), interviews are intended to ‘elicit participants’ account of aspects of their experience’ and not a search for specific answers to specific questions. Interviews can be identified as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Punch & Oancea, 2014:183).

Wellington (2015:141) argues that semi-structured interviews are considered as a compromise between structured and unstructured interviews. He contends that they provide a position which is free of a tight rigid structure that does not allow any deviations from the wording of pre-set questions. At the same time, this in-between position avoids a situation of asking general questions that keep the interview going and depend upon the unfolding of matters. According to Punch and Oancea (2014:184), semi-structured interviews have in-built flexibility which allows adaptation to different situations and participants; and are guided by a set of questions. For Wellington (2015:141), the interviewer decides on the range of questions. These set of questions are supported by probes and prompts for discussion (Punch & Oancea, 2014:184; Wellington 2015:141). This property of semi-structured interviews is also mentioned by Daniels (2012:16) who argues that different participants are asked the same questions and probes are used to uncover the meaning of the participant’s response. Wellington (2015:147) cautions that probing should be exercised ‘carefully and sensitively’. Moreover, Wellington (2015:141) argue that participants are the ones who tend to dictate the interview rather than the interviewer. This is because of the flexibility of the structure which allows the researcher not to stick to the sequence of the pre-set questions but can use probes to dig more on what seems to dwell in much, I think. Punch and Oancea (2014:182) point out that the interviewer and the interviewee must ‘grasp the meaning together’. The point is, how we come to

understanding each other in the language of meaning is important. Thus, Daniels (2012:16) views semi-structured interviews as a special type of conversation which yield to a sense of mutual understanding between two parties.

Lastly, the researcher must establish 'rapport' with the research's participants (King & Horrocks, 2010:48; Punch & Oancea, 2014:185, Wellington, 2015:141, 145). According to King & Horrocks (2010:48), to establish a rapport is not to seek favour with the study participants, rather it is essentially about building trust which then relaxes the atmosphere and so, enabling the participants to be comfortable and find it easy to open up to the researcher. Indicating the features of rapport, Wellington (2015:145) argues that it must be the outcome of a 'positive, pleasant, yet business-like approach'. The point is it prepares the ground for interviewing to be a pleasant conversation.

2.9 SAMPLING AND SELECTION

I start this section with a question, what is a sample? To respond to this question, I consider Wellington (2015:116) who describes a sample as a small part of something which is intended to represent the whole. This description of a sample suggests that sampling, then, is a consideration of a small part of something which is intended to represent the whole. I also encountered Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:55) who argues that sampling is a selection of a group of individuals from a population. Concurring with this description, Cohen *et al.* (2007:175) view sampling as 'deciding which people it will be possible to select to represent the wider group'. Thus, Wellington (2015:116) points out that in educational research, sampling is not like sipping a glass of wine and get convinced that the whole bottle tastes the same, rather 'we have to select a sample from the whole range of possibilities'. He also notes that, even so, we can never be certain that the sample we have is fully representative of the whole population from which it was selected. Thus, generalising the results is always not possible.

According to Punch and Oancea (2014:210), sampling strategies vary according to different characteristics and purposes. Wellington (2015:117) gives two sampling typologies, the probability, and non-probability sampling. My interest is not on probability sampling as it concerns sample size (Wellington, 2015:117). The sampling strategies that fall under non-probability sampling include, purposive, convenience, and snowball (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:211; Wellington, 2015:118). Purposive sampling is described by Punch and Oancea (2014:210) as a deliberate sampling, a sampling with some focus in mind. On the one hand, Wellington (2015:118) argues that it is a sampling that serves the objectives or the purpose of the study. Thus, purposive sampling helps the researcher to capture

sufficiently the heterogeneity in the population (Maxwell, 2008:235; Khoza, 2015:184)). Moreover, purposive sampling enables the researcher to explore the phenomenon of inquiry by targeting the people or settings that show significant variations of the phenomenon, which also show common patterns (Wellington, 2015:119; Punch and Oancea, 2014:211). Cohen *et al.* (2007:175) caution that a researcher must decide on a sample for which the research questions are relevant and the contexts that are essential for the study.

Punch and Oancea (2014:210) remark that sampling tends to focus on people sampling, but documents also have issues of sampling. In agreement with this Cohen *et al.* (2007:477) argue that the rules of sampling people may sometimes apply in a sampling of documents, of which one is to mention the type of sampling used. In this study, both the selection of participants and documents was guided purposive sampling. Thus, this study proceeds by analysing the SASA (Act No. 84 of 1996); ELAA (Republic of South Africa, 2007); and the Standard (2015). These documents, according to Cohen *et al* (2014:194) fall under the category of primary sources.

The three high school principals were selected from two WCED districts. One districts is urban while the other is rather rural (mostly farms). The geographical allocation of these high schools speaks to their socio-economic status, hence their different quintiles as determined by the policy on National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) (Mestry & Ndlovu, 2014:4). The curriculum focus of the school in the urban district is in mathematics and engineering, while the two schools from the rural district are academically oriented. Though I have mentioned that one district is mostly rural, the degree of being rurally located of the schools differ. One high school is a township school where almost the entire population of learners are black Africans. Whereas the other high school is located in a small town and has a learner residents accommodation (boarding school). It is one of the former Model C schools. The selection of these high was based on the criteria that: (1) for the past three years has shown significant improvement or have performed above 80% in metric results or has a standing record of such; (2) they have dissimilar contexts (in terms of socio-economic background, infrastructure, history of existence, and so on; (3) the learner population is different both in size and cultural backgrounds.

I also considered it worthwhile to have a female principal among the three interviewees. This inclusion of a female principal stems from my personal interests as a female teacher with aspirations to become a high school principal. This may assist in understanding myself in the imaginary world of principalship. I draw from Soltis (1983:14) who considers philosophy of education as comprising of three dimensions namely, the personal, the public and the professional. For him, the personal

dimension seems basic and pervasive. For me, this means that this dimension is one's being, it is prevalent to a person and un-escapable. Soltis (1983:15) argues that to be philosophical about education from the view of personal dimension is for 'an individual to achieve a satisfying sense of personal meaning, purpose, and commitment to guide his/her activities as an educator'. Moreover, the insights to be gained from the articulations of the roles of high principals as instructional leaders by a female principal will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on female principals. The semi-structured interviews will assist me to explore the meanings that high school principals articulate as their roles as instructional leaders. The small scale (three principals only) will enable me to delve into the phenomenon both in the conversations and analysis.

2.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter details the entire design of my research project. The introduction draws the attention of a reader to the philosophical assumptions of the researcher as indicated by the choice of methodology. Therefore, it delineates the research design, a plan that informs how the research was carried out. I then proceed to explore the different paradigms namely, the positivism, critical theory, and interpretivism. This concludes by locating this study in an interpretive paradigm, with Gadamer's hermeneutics being my researcher methodology.

The methodology of my study was decided after confirming my assumption through exploring other contemporary hermeneutic approaches. These are Paul Ricoeur and African hermeneutics. Importantly, the discussion of Gadamer's hermeneutics gave me insights on its important elements for the researcher to consider. These significant elements are the hermeneutic question, the hermeneutic circle, the historically effected consciousness, and the fusion of horizons.

The research methods were discussed in the approach of conceptual analysis, the main method of the study, supplemented by documentary analysis and the semi-structured interviews. Lastly, I gave a detailed, yet brief discussion on sampling of both policy documents for analysis and the research participants (high school principals).

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is dedicated to exploring the literature that is relevant to this study. The literature review is one of the important aspects of research, which I view as grounding the research study. I also think it is a challenging exercise. Booth, Papaioannou, and Sutton (2012:3) caution that if one has to conduct a literature review effectively, one needs to do it efficiently, considering the fulfilment of the right quality of the final product. They argue that, in the context of a literature review, quality refers to ‘appropriate breadth and depth, rigor and consistency, clarity and brevity, and effective analysis and synthesis’. Although I had been interacting with the literature progressively and continuously, this statement by Booth *et al.* made me realize how challenging it is to undertake a literature review. It is not just reading and writing or providing a summary of what one has read, but rather to produce a logical conversation that one has had with others in the field of study.

I explore, briefly, the concept of a literature review in the next section. I do this by first answering the question: what is a literature review?

3.2 WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

A literature review, according to Lategan (2011), is a scholarly review. According to Lategan, (2011:73), a scholarly review comprises ‘an own interpretation of and reflection on existing literature’. He further argues that this interpretation is underlain by critical engagement with the research topic. In the light of this assertion, Booth *et al.* (2012:1) caution that, without a literature review, one will not fully understand the topic. The enhancement of understanding develops the skill of ‘critical appraisal’ in one’s engagement with the literature (Taylor & Procter, 2008:4). For Taylor and Procter, a critical appraisal is the ability to analyse and recognise biases, concurrences and contrasts. To embark on a literature review means that one must employ one’s critical thinking skills and be able to discern. As such, Ridley (2012:2) notes that a literature review is a ‘complex phenomenon’.

Furthermore, Fink (2014:3) describes a literature review in research as a ‘systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising the existing body of completed and

recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners'. Booth *et al.* (2012:18) associate being systematic in conducting a literature review with words such as explicit, transparent, structured, and reproducible, to mention a few, while they link conducting an unsystematic literature review with words that include implicit, chaotic and individualistic. For me, this provides guiding identifiers for reflection on whether I am conducting a systematic or an unintended, unsystematic literature review as a new researcher.

I considered Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:17), who argues that the purpose of a literature review is to locate one's own study in an entire framework of what is already known about the topic from previous research studies, which then helps the reader to grasp the bigger picture. Expanding on this notion, Ridley (2012:23-24) argues that a literature review has multiple purposes in a research study. For her, these purposes include providing a historical background to the study; giving an overview of the current context in which one's research is situated; providing a discussion of relevant theories and concepts that underpin one's research; introducing relevant terminology; and providing definitions to clarify how terms are used in the context of one's own work.

This is the section in the research, I believe, where the researcher gains understanding of the concept he/she is researching and gets to meet the experienced and upcoming researchers in the field, and thereby gains self-understanding. Lastly, Ylimaki and Jacobson (2013:12) assert that the literature review informs the conceptual framework that will guide the research. It appears that one's study is also shaped by the existing work in one's field. In conducting a literature review as a researcher, one becomes familiarised with the essential concepts in the area of study and constructs meanings that will frame one's own research study. In the next section, I conduct a detailed literature review to explore high school principals' roles as instructional leaders and construct meanings for my study. I also consult literature on the academic performance of high schools, particularly the matric class or grade 12 (matric and grade 12 will be used interchangeably in this research) from 2008 to 2018.

3.2.1 Conceptualising the role of a high school principal in South Africa

The democratic policy frameworks that were adopted to transform the education system are among the concepts that shape the role of principals in South African schools (Bush, 2007:393; Christie, 2010:694). The country's 2014 progress report notes that the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996) was amended by the Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) (Republic of South Africa, 2007), which cites the functions and responsibilities of a principal (DBE, 2014a:8). This shows that these policy frameworks are continuously facing reviews to inform the roles of principals so as to meet the

current demands. This makes the principals' roles to be in a state of continuous development, thus (supposedly) ensuring that principals in SA lead the way in lifelong learning.

Taole (2013:75) asserts that South Africa is experiencing a continuous 'period of change', characterised by curriculum transformations that exert pressure on principals. In agreement, Mestry (2017:1) notes that these reforms happen rapidly. This suggests that principals are not given enough time to understand and get a grasp of the new developments; changes are happening too fast. Kallaway (2012:13) regards it as a matter of common knowledge to understand that 'education systems run much like supertankers, which are very difficult to stop or turn around at short notice'. This exemplifies the difficulty high school principals may be facing in understanding and performing their roles. I refer to high school principals in particular, because of grade 12 learner output that speaks volumes in education debates, in circles of policy makers, and for reference in the economic growth of the country (Naicker & Mestry, 2016). This argument is also supported by Wills (2015a:32), who notes that matriculation examinations have become the only national measure of school performance in South Africa. This means that grade 12 academic performance is something of an indicator of a principal's effectiveness in a school.

The complexity of a principal's work is also captured by Bush (2007:393), who notes that principals are 'inundated' by propositions from businessmen to politicians, advising them on how to lead and manage a school. The word 'inundated' suggests that principals are overwhelmed by this advice. On the other hand, Mestry (2013:119) argues that '(p)incipals today face more demands, more complex decisions, and more responsibilities than principals of the past'. Furthermore, Daniel and Greytak (2014:118) argue that principals need to be knowledgeable about legal and policy matters, and must act as educational visionaries and assessment experts, among others. For Daniel and Greytak, this proves how extensive the educational atmosphere is that today's principals are facing, full of expectations and barriers. The legal dimension of a principal's responsibility cannot be neglected when discussing the nature of principalship in South African high schools. One of the reasons is captured by Themane, Mabasa and Mathedimosa (2017:8767), who say that in recent years the nature of safety in high schools has become unstable.

Lastly, Faulkner (2015:419) also highlights that high school principals' position, in general, is '... a position that is traditionally, and mainly occupied by men'. Themane *et al.* (2017:8767) also note that, traditionally, South Africa, like many countries, has reserved curriculum leadership for men. Faulkner and Themane *et al.* share a common view that this is an international issue. However,

Themane *et al.* indicate that this scenario is now changing, and this change is quite noticeable in high schools, ‘where it was unheard of’ before the advent of democracy.

In this brief overview of the position of South African principals in general, I have tried to make sense of the principals’ roles and their gender representativeness, as witnessed in the literature. The next section focuses on the readiness of principals when assuming their position.

3.2.2 Principals’ readiness for their position

Mestry (2017:1) remarks that ‘(m)any practicing principals lack basic leadership and management training prior to and after their entry into principalship’. This suggests that many principals assume their positions unprepared, as Mestry argues that they do not possess the ‘basic’ training in leadership and management. In the case of the high school principals in my study, a lack of relevant education may account for the poor academic performance of learners (Mestry, 2017:2). As such, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, in its proposal to improve school management, puts it clearly that ‘(t)he main responsibility of a school principal should be to lead the core business of the school’ (Republic of South Africa, 2012:309), teaching and learning. The question now is: what is the requirement for applicants to be considered for the principal’s position?

The NDP 2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2012) makes proposals for improving school management in which it cites three broad areas of policy improvements for school principals, namely changing the principal’s appointment process, implementing an entry qualification for principals, and managing their performance. Furthermore, the DBE (2015) cites programmes that are aimed at improving the leadership and management of principals, which include the introduction of the Advanced Diploma in Leadership and Management. These assertions point out that, as a country, we do not have a preparation programme for principals in the form a professional qualification to ensure their readiness. I also considered the revised version of the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) document (DBE, 2016). The PAM document states that a ‘three- or four-year qualification, which includes professional teacher education’, is a recognised minimum qualification to be appointed as a school principal; and one should be registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (DBE, 2016:55). It also provides a range of competences and skills expected from individuals who are pursuing principalship. These include, but are not limited to, good knowledge of teaching as provided in the professional qualification; good management and leadership skills; and good knowledge of applicable educator legislation, regulations and policies.

Additionally, the PAM stipulates that educators need to have seven years of ‘actual teaching experience’ to consider applying for principalship. Nevertheless, there is still no mention of the implementation of specific education qualification or an entrance qualification that will prepare principals for their enormous task. This was confirmed recently by Mestry (2017:1), who noted that his research revealed that, ‘in South Africa, there is no formal preparation for aspiring or practicing principals taking on leadership and management positions ...’. The NDP 2030 has pointed out that the main responsibility of a school principal should be to lead the school’s core business, teaching and learning. For me, this simply means that high school principals’ core business is to be an instructional leader.

In the previous section, scholars, researchers, and policy makers articulated in varying degrees the extensive responsibilities of principals in schools. I then reflected on the minimum requirements upon appointment, the seven years of experience of actual teaching, and the wide range of competences and skills that one must accrue during this period. In my process of reflection, an old saying cropped into my mind – ‘little knowledge is dangerous’ (one can expand on this to say especially when it is to be used where extensive knowledge is required). Is the poor performance of some of our high schools, or their being declared dysfunctional, because of applying too little knowledge in a sphere where in-depth and wide-ranging knowledge is required? I tried to understand the position of seven years’ experience. Can a high school teacher, after teaching successfully for seven years at post level one, and then applying for principalship in, say, the eighth year – would this make him/her adequately equipped for the position? If not, how does one interpret this ‘seven years of experience’? Or do we have to look for the meaning ‘elsewhere, not in the words or text’, as Derrida advises (Waghid, 2004:14).

Based on one of Williams’s (2015:183-184) critiques of the Advanced Certificate in Education, that it has a generic approach, principals, deputy principals and departmental heads were receiving the same training, despite their unique roles. The amount of faith put in seven years’ experience without structured preparation for principalship, for me, does not make sense. I then considered Mestry (2017:2), who argues that principals tend to neglect their ‘... responsibilities of instructional leadership because they are not fully aware of their primary task ...’. Again, in more than a decade, Bush and Oduro (2006:367) argue that ‘new principals cannot serve as instructional leaders’. This shows that the requirements for principalship are found wanting in a crucial dimension of principalship, namely instructional leadership. Gage and Smith (2016:2) contend that ‘(n)o examination, qualification or formal training can adequately prepare one for the role of leader’. This

assertion, to me, is illustrative of the extensive responsibilities that principals are faced with, such that there is no kind of preparation that can equate to the challenge.

Mestry (2017) contends that '(p)incipals experience great difficulty in coping with numerous changes, ...'. My question now is: how do high school principals cope in the position? In my attempt to answer this question, I came across Bhengu and Myende (2016), whose research findings reveal that principals utilise 'creative and innovative ways'. On the other hand, Gage and Smith (2016:2) see leadership as a matter of rational intelligence ('IQ') and as a call of common sense to identify a suitable leadership role. For them, 'IQ' is learned through schooling in one's development to adulthood and follows on from the intelligence one is born with. Grobler (2014:870) furthermore notes that principals are advised that they 'need to learn how to control their emotional experiences arising from the contradictions associated with change'. He notes that emotional intelligence plays a significant role, where negative emotions are likely to be activated, as in 'providing feedback to teachers about their teaching performance'. Giving feedback on the teaching performance of teachers suggests instructional leadership of a principal.

Returning to the notion of 'IQ', the US National Libraries of Medicine (2015) argues that intelligence is a complex trait influenced by both genetic and environmental factors. It also provides elements of intelligence, varying from the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly and understand complex ideas, which concur with Gage and Smith's notion of 'IQ'. Wilcocks (1931:72) also indicates that genetics accounts for minor effects on the IQ than an environmental factor. For South Africa with a highly uneven schooling contexts, viewed by Naicker, Chikoko, and Mthiyane (2013:S138) as a 'continuum'; can we then rely on rational intelligence as a coping mechanism and for high school principals' readiness and efficacy. Wilcocks (1931:63) further argues that wide differences in intelligence 'exist between individuals'. This can be said of principals and their varying school contexts, in which they have no exposure to a formal preparative education qualification, which could be a baseline for all principals' readiness for the extensive responsibilities arising from instructional leadership.

Mestry and Singh (2007:478) still point to the absence of qualifications for being appointed as principals as accounting for the under-performance in management and leadership roles by most principals. Tsukudu and Taylor (1995:114) noted more than two decades ago that 'acquiring management expertise can no longer be left to common sense and character alone', while Mestry (2017:1) points out that principals still depend on experience and common sense. Consequently,

Backor and Gordon (2015:107) argue emphatically that ‘(t)o fulfil the instructional leadership role, school principals must be adequately prepared by their principal preparation program’.

3.3.2 The changing landscape of the roles of principals

Since the advent of democracy, a number of policies have been developed with the intent to transform the South African schooling system (Naicker, Chikoko & Mthiyane, 2013:38; Williams, 2015:176). In the apartheid era, principals were viewed as implementers of the government’s agenda (Naidu *et al.*, 2008:4). For Naidu *et al.*, principals were only administrators in a ‘highly regulated environment’. Steyn (n.d.:252) argues that the apartheid schooling system was ‘administered by means of a top-down approach management system’ and principals were at the receiving end. Christie (2010:698) concurs with Naidu *et al.* (2008:4:), saying that the term ‘administration’ was preferred in ‘pre-1994 South Africa’. The decentralisation of powers (Steyn, n.d.; Hoadley & Ward, 2009:3) has mandated school principals to assume a new stance.

Botha (2004:239) points out ‘(t)he changing role of the professional principal’. He argues that the workload of principals, particularly high school principals, has become increasingly ‘unmanageable’. Traditionally, the principals’ role was limited to managerial and administrative tasks, and did not consist of any teaching duties (Botha, 2004:239; Taole 2013:75). For Taole, school-based management is changing totally, and it therefore requires a new professionalism from principals. For Botha (2004:239-240), the role of principals as learning experts is constantly important. He further proposes that principals’ duties need to be ‘more orientated toward being experts in teaching and learning, and in establishing an environment that facilitates this’ (Botha, 2004:240). For Botha, principals, as instructional leaders, should spend more time creating the necessary pre-conditions for improved teaching and learning. So far, the shifts indicate that principals’ roles have moved from being just an administrator to be an instructional leader.

Similarly, Botha (2004:240) remarks that, in its significant form, ‘the principal’s role in the new educational dispensation represents a balance between instructional leadership and management’. Masitsa (2005:206) concurs with Botha on the reconceptualisation of principals’ roles. He contends that, as managers and instructional leaders, principals must ‘initiate the restoration of a culture’ of learning. Masitsa also points out that principals’ management of a school is effective only if it yields ‘effective instruction’. Thus, Taole (2013:76) asserts that instructional leadership is a very important dimension, since it focuses on the ‘school central activities, teaching and learning’, and it is the principals’ fundamental role to ‘promote learning success of all learners in the school’. In the same

light, Msila (2013:81) argues that the current shifts are the ones that focus attention on the principal's instructional leadership role, rather than 'building management and other administrative matters'. He also charges that '(i)nstructional leaders know that successful leadership is one that supports successful teaching and learning'. These arguments further point out that the recent shifts are towards principals' roles as instructional leaders rather than anything else.

According to Mestry and Singh (2007:478), the major changes in principalship have possibly resulted from the 'range of expectations' of the position. They note that the expectations of a principal have shifted from 'demands of management and control to the demands for an educational leader'. Christie (2010:698) traces the principal's role position pre-1994, and also finds this evolution from administration to management through to leadership. Bush, Bell and Middlewood (2010:4) concur with this pattern of the changing landscape of principalship. Christie contends that, in the 1990s, the notion of principals viewed as managers saw principals acquire skills to run schools as organisations. The 'leadership discourses', on the other hand, view principals as individuals who are in the position of influencing others through vision (Christie, 2010:696, 698, 699). She further argues that the concept of instructional leadership appeared during the period of reconceptualisation of principals as leaders, among other concepts.

Moreover, the Task Team on Education Management (TTEM) said that the new DoE 'radically shifted the direction and vision of the education system after 1994 with a series of policy initiatives and new legislation' (DoE, 1996:11). As such, Wills (2015b:96) approaches this subject of the changing landscapes of principals from the policy angle, and outlines the shifts as informed by policy and legislation. He notes that, for the past decade in South Africa, shifts that promote the value of school leadership and management as central forces for the realisation of 'learning gains' have been recorded. Wills mentions the NDP and the ELAA among the policies that set an environment of shifting roles for principalship. Concerning the ELAA, Wills (2015b:98) argues that it places more accountability for school performance in principals' hands. By school performance, he seems to refer to learners' academic performance. Wills (2015b:114) also notes that both international and local literature distinguish the need for principals who have a strong instructional focus that will lead the school activities to focus on its core business, namely teaching and learning.

Mestry (2017:2) still claims that 'poor academic standards' in schools are an indication of a lack of leadership and management. In the next section, I take my gaze to the roles of high school principals as managers.

3.2.3 High school principals as instructional managers

Although the leadership and management roles of a principal overlap, they still have distinct duties. Bush *et al.* (2010:5) contend that there is a significant difference between these concepts; they are distinct ‘dimensions of organizational activity’ (Bush, 2008:272). For me, it means that high school principals cannot favour one over the other. For excellence in the schools’ primary business – leading and managing instruction – they need to strike an appropriate balance between the two or, if possible, it should be the best of both. But, what concerns high school principals’ instructional management role?

Bush (2007) claims that management is associated with maintenance. He further asserts that ‘managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements’ (Bush, 2007:392). The management dimension of a high school principal takes care of technical or implementation issues (Bush *et al.*, 2010:5). This is in line with Bush’s (2011:1) description of educational management, which he views ‘as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy’. As such, Bennis (2009:42) describes a manager as someone who does things right. It simply means that principals as instructional leaders cannot disregard this dimension of being managers with the idea that their roles have progressed to the leadership dimension. Principals still need to assume a management stance.

According to Bush (2011:1), the focus of management is on achieving the organisation’s purpose or goals. On this notion, Bush *et al.* (2010:5-6) cautions managers to be aware of ‘managerialism’ by emphasising the importance of managing for ‘clear educational purpose’. Managerialism, according to Bush and Bell (2002:4), may also result from ‘assuming a sharp difference’ between management and leadership, and they caution that this is dangerous. But what is managerialism? Bush and Bell (2002:4) describe managerialism as an emphasis on implementation, with little regard for the values and purpose of education. This means that it focuses more on procedures while laying out the purpose of education (Bush, 2007:391). Although Hoadley and Ward (2009:3) argue that new responsibilities resulting from decentralisation, giving rise to self-managing schools, ‘is often accompanied by ‘new managerialism’ characterised by strong accountability ...’. Bush (2007:391) provides a safe way of thinking about management for principals, as school managers, to keep the connection between purpose and management ‘clear and close’. For him, the purposes or goals guide and underpin school management. In the light of this, Naidu *et al.* (2008:5) argue that, based on the point that education is the basic goal of schools, so principals’ management ought to be centred on effective teaching and learning. Consequently, Bush (2011:17) notes that a continuous emphasis on the management of

teaching and learning as ‘core activities of educational institutions’ resulted in a special focus on instructional leadership, which he describes as a ‘learning-centred leadership’.

It seems to me that management is centred around control, based on a predetermined schedule that may require principals to have concepts of accountability when articulating their roles as instructional leaders in their position as managers. It then suggests that, if high school principals can align themselves solemnly with this dimension, the articulation of their roles as instructional leaders, which links to management, may result in high schools turning into those organisations Bolman and Deal (2017:x) refer to as ‘overmanaged and underled’, and which ultimately lose their sense of purpose. Thus, ‘(t)he challenges of today’s organizations require the objective perspective of managers as well as the brilliant flashes of vision that wise leadership provides’ (Bolman & Deal, 2017:x). These arguments, I think, are a best fit for the context of high schools in South Africa, particularly for the position that principals may assume when articulating their roles as instructional leaders. Next, I discuss the position of high school principals as leaders.

3.2.4 High school principals as instructional leaders

The concept of leadership is complex and contested (Hoadley & Ward, 2009:8; Gage & Smith, 2016:1). For Bennis (2009:xxx), to some degree ‘leadership is like beauty: it’s hard to define, but you know it when you see it’. Bush (2007:392) asserts that leadership is about influencing others’ actions to achieve the necessary or looked-for ends. About influencing others, Bennis (2009:151) argues that ‘I can have a great deal of influence just by my voice’. He also contends that leaders who know how to be in charge without being in control, lead through voice instead of position. Bennis (2009:xxv) argues that a leader’s voice comprises, among other things, a purpose, self-confidence, and a sense of self. So, influencing through voice simply renders leadership to focus on an imagined world which its realisation rests with all the members of that specific culture in pursuit of it as influenced (Bush, 2011:6) by the leader.

According to Heystek (2016:1), leadership ‘implies followership and relationships, motivation, trust and respect, vision, and a willingness to challenge the status quo’. With regard to fellowship, Bennis (2009:xxi) argues that an organisation’s success lies in great followership rather than in a great leader. Concerning vision and challenging the status quo, Bush (2007:392) posits that leadership is associated with change. As such, Khumalo (2015:35) contends that leadership embodies coping with change. For me, this simply means that leaders initiate change as they challenge the ‘status quo’ and envisioning a broader horizon. Thus, questioning the usual and embracing the unfamiliar pose a

challenge, but leaders are coping with those situations. On the other hand, leadership is allied to vision and ‘the ability to articulate’ the captured vision throughout the organisation one is leading (Naidu *et al.*, 2008:6; Bush, 2011:8). According to Bennis (2009:xxv), it is one of the leader’s competences to have vision, and to engage others in creating shared meanings. For him, leaders can persuade others to adopt the vision and make it their own. Central to communication is the self-awareness, understanding oneself and one’s world (Bennis, 2009:xxxix) of being. Gadamer (1975:xxvii) asserts that understanding is a ‘mode of being’ of Dasein itself” and not one of any possible behaviours. For Gadamer (1975:xvii), Dasein means ‘existence’, ‘human being’. High school principals exist in schools and their roles as instructional leaders suggest their participation. The value of one’s participation, for me, is determined by their way of existing in a particular context. Thus, a high school principal needs to understand his/her role as an instructional leader as a mode of being that comprises, among other things, articulating the school’s vision.

Communicating the organisation’s vision or goals is one way of influencing; in fact, influence, I believe, is carried through communication (verbally or in deeds). But most importantly, I think, the being of a leader is more influential in communicating the organisation’s vision. Bush *et al.* (2010:4) argue that leadership begins with the leader’s character, presented as personal values, self-awareness, and both emotional and moral capabilities. In agreement, Bennis (2009:xviii, xxvi) notes that ‘leadership is always about character’ and emphasises that ‘integrity is [the] most important characteristic’ of leaders that they must demonstrate over and over. Furthermore, leaders must have the kind of integrity that creates trust to ‘facilitate communication and mediate conflict’ (Bennis, 2009:xxiii). It becomes clear that it is the character of a leader that communicates vision effectively and forges followership; hence, we can talk of an influential leader who can get people on his/her side. On the one hand, Naidu *et al.* (2008:6) contend that leadership encompasses the ‘ability to understand the emerging trends in education and to guide a school through various challenges by achieving a vision based on shared values’. On the other hand, Bush *et al.* (2010:4) assert that values regarding leadership underpin actions. This, to me, means that vision is linked to values. Thus, shared values that high school principals as instructional leaders communicate in their schools becomes the schools’ philosophy. Begley (2010:35) describes values as conceptions of the desirable, with inspiring ‘force characteristic of individuals, groups, organisations and societies that influence choices made from available resources and means’. Thus, Bennis (2009:1), borrowing from Gardner, asserts that ‘(l)eaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind (t)hey can express values that hold the society together’.

Therefore, high school principals as instructional leaders need to create and articulate values in teaching and learning that can hold the school community (immediate and extended) together while advancing the purpose of education. Of the three domains of the purpose of education discussed in **Chapter 1**, Peters and Biesta (2009:98) note that a major purpose rests in qualification. Hence, there is a constant concern about the poor performance of high school learners, particularly in grade 12, as these academic results are an indication of skills, knowledge constructed and dispositions. Bush *et al.* (2010:8) argue that leadership should be underpinned by a clear sense of educational purpose, and points out that, for principals, ‘... their primary and unique purpose is to promote learning’. For them, this primary and unique purpose is referred to as the leadership of learning, or instructional leadership. Bush (2011:16) concurs with this notion by arguing that the promotion of teaching and learning is the superseding purpose of schools. Thus, Taole (2013:75) asserts that leadership plays a key role in ‘motivating teachers and creating a culture of learning in the school’. Principals as instructional leaders are concerned with ‘teacher development and the improvement of learner performance’ (Taole, 2013:76-77). As leaders are associated with vision (Bush *et al.*, 2010:4), high school principals engage with staff to formulate the vision and mission of the school (Mestry, 2017:1). The identified vision must articulate the education purpose (Bush *et al.*, 2010:4). Bush (2011:ix) advises that principals need to be good leaders. Good leaders, Bennis (2009:44) argues, become successful in spite of their weaknesses, because they are able to deploy their strengths well and compensate for their weaknesses (Bennis, 2009:xxxi).

Naidu *et al.* (2008:6) argue that school management and leadership ‘are two sides of the same coin’. High school principals as instructional leaders need to possess skills from both for the continuous improvement of schools’ effectiveness. Mestry (2017:1) contends that principals identify the vision and mission of the school; Bennis (2009:152) remarks, ‘we’re not managing for the sake of being great managers, we’re managing for mission’. For me, this simply means that, as leaders relate to vision, managers are aligned with mission. For a vision is pursued through a mission, I think. Bush *et al.* (2010:5) note the importance of managing and leading as essential dimensions that need to be equally recognised in schools, because different contexts require different responses. This idea is made clearer by Bolman and Deal (2017), who also argue that managing and leading are different but equally important. They caution that ‘a poorly managed organisation with a strong charismatic leader may soar briefly – only to crash shortly thereafter’, whereas, an ‘over managed and under led’ organisation ultimately loses its sense of purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2017:x). So, principals need to articulate both aspects in their roles as instructional leaders.

Bennis (2009:41-42) provides a dichotomy between leaders and managers, saying that leaders master the context, whereas managers surrender to it; managers administer, while leaders innovate; managers maintain, while leaders develop; managers focus on systems and structures, and leaders focus on people; managers imitate, whereas leaders originate; managers rely on control, while leaders inspire trust; and managers have their eyes always on the bottom line, while leaders' eyes are on the horizon. In sum, Naicker *et al.* (2016:1) associate 'high quality leadership [with] positive school outcomes', while Bush (2018:359) claims that effective leadership plays a significant role 'in promoting school improvement'. Mestry (2017:2) proposes that poor academic performance in schools, globally, is one of the indicative factors of a lack of effective leadership and management. In this thesis, I argue that high school principals as instructional leaders need to establish a working balance as both managers and leaders of instruction. Next, I take my gaze to trends in high school learners' academic performance, particularly that of the grade 12 class.

3.2.5 Trends in high school academic learner performance

The main mandate of the new education policies was to address the inequalities in the education system by improving the quality of education for all (Republic of South Africa, 1995; Bush & Heystek, 2006:63). In the same vein, Bush (2007:393) notes that the enactment of the SASA was a step towards the self-management of schools. The self-management of schools meant that crucial decisions about the school's improvement are made at the school level (Bush & Heystek, 2006:63-64; Bush, 2007:293). This was unlike the case prior to democracy, when the 'education department had to determine, maintain, and raise the standard of academic performance' (Gowpall, 2015:35). These changes held the promise of equal-quality education, and guaranteed education rights and learning opportunities (Republic of South Africa, 1995:6, 19, 21).

However, the autonomy of schools has been marked by 'recurring poor academic performance' in matric examinations (in quantity and quality) and across the entire high school band (DBE, 2010; Naicker & Mestry, 2016:1). The poor performance of grade 12 learners undermines the imagined equal education, mainly because high schools from the poor communities (previously disadvantaged) suffer the most (Naicker & Mestry, 2016:1; Seobi & Wood, 2016:1). Thus, some believe that the inequalities are widening (Botman, 2016:66; Mestry, 2016:2; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016:1). The underperformance by schools is much felt in subjects like mathematics and physical sciences (Taylor, 2008). Umalusi (2016:2), the quality assurance body, confirmed in its statement on approving the national examination results that, in mathematics, 'the needle has not moved significantly over the

years in this country'. Similarly, Roberts (2017:3) notes that the grade 12 mathematics results have remained 'worryingly stagnant'.

South Africa has shown poor performance in Annual National Assessments (ANA) (now halted) for grade 9 mathematics. Mathematics is one of the three subjects identified by the minister of education as 'crucial subjects' (DBE, 2015a). Moreover, Gustafsson (2016:1) refers to mathematics and physical sciences as 'key subjects'. For Tsanwani, Engelbrecht, Harding and Maree (2013:36), an unsatisfactory attainment in mathematics 'is a major concern because of its ripple effect on virtually every aspect of learners' academic lives'. The ANA results, from their implementation in 2012 to their cessation in 2015, show that learners' results remained below 15% for the three years. In 2012, the pass rate was 12.7%, in 2013 it was 13.9%, and it dropped to 11% in 2014 (DBE, 2014a; Van der Berg, 2016:2). The DBE (2014a:34) points out that the 2012 and 2013 ANA results for mathematics were quite similar. Mestry (2017:2) confirms that the ANA results 'remained poor'.

According to Grobler (2014), efforts to improve poor academic performance in South African schools have given rise to the mandate of Schooling 2025. However, a new action plan was released in 2015, the Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030 (DBE, 2015a), which also states the required improvements regarding academic standards. Naicker and Mestry (2016) argue that the recurring 'poor academic performance of South African learners is detrimental to its developing economy'. Bush *et al.* (2011:38) trace the poor matric academic performance from 2006, and point out that this was when matric results started to show a decline. I consider the period from 2008 to 2017 in tracking grade 12 academic performance. I focus mainly on this period, simply because, in 2008, South Africa presented the first NSC and was implementing a new curriculum, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (DBE, 2014a:35). Starting with learner performance in grade 12 mathematics, the graph below outlines the history of matric performance in mathematics for the NSC from 2008 to 2018.

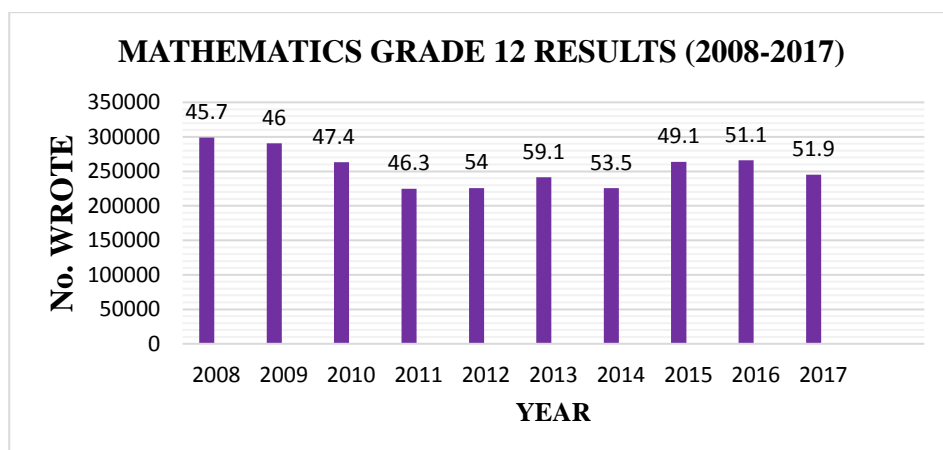


Figure 3.2.5. (a) Mathematics Grade 12 results (2008-2017)
(Information obtained from DBE, 2014a:35, 2017)

The history of grade 12 performance in NSC mathematics reveals that, from 2008 to 2018, the pass rate never reached 60%, but rather often lingers below 50%; it reached 50% only a few times. The DBE (2014a:34) cites poor subject choices by learners as a reason for poor performance in NSC mathematics. However, Tsanwani *et al.* (2013:37) link the poor performance in grade 12 mathematics to low standards set by principals in schools, among others. Moreover, the findings of a qualitative study that examined principals' instructional leadership practices designed to improve the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in 102 effective high schools (Jita, 2010:852) agree with Tsanwani *et al.*'s assertion. These findings show that the more successful high schools in their sample had principals who ensured that instruction was 'one of their daily priorities'. In less successful high school, principals tended to delegate their instructional leadership duties.

Trends in matric results in the NSC over the past few years are well documented (DBE, 2014; Van Wyk, 2015; Howie, 2016; BusinessTech, 2017; DBE, 2018). These trends are represented in the graph below, showing pass rates as percentages from 2008 to 2017.

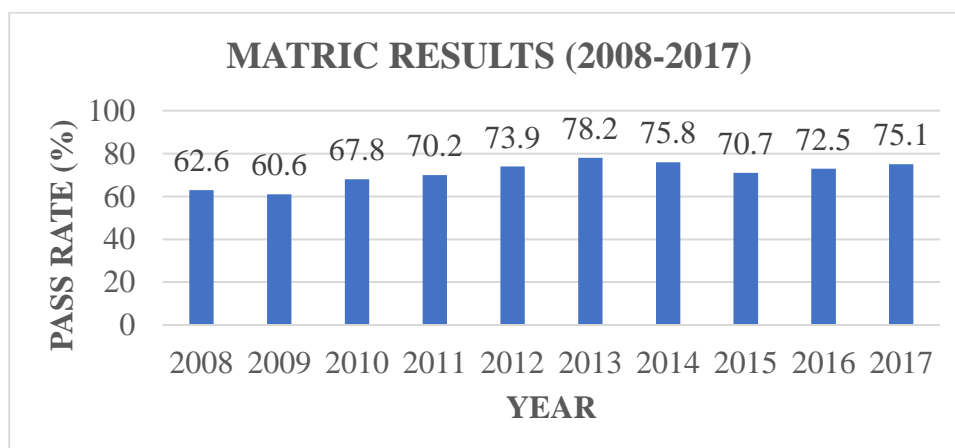


Figure 3.2.5. (b) Matric results (2008-1017)

The trends show that the highest pass rate of 78.2% was last seen in 2013, as reflected in the graph above. It is said to be the highest matric pass percentage in the history of post-apartheid SA (Mail & Guardian, 2014). Maarman and Larmount-Mbawuli (2017) refer to the trend of results from grade 7 to 12 as ‘suboptimal’. By suboptimal they seem to mean that results are below an acceptable standard.

3.2.5.1 Matric pass rate distribution over the first three school quintiles

I begin this section by asking a question: what are school quintiles? The SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996) set out several frameworks, including the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) (Christie, 2010:701). The NNSSF intended to provide a uniform system of public school funding by the State throughout the country. Chapter 4 of SASA states clearly that it is the State’s responsibility to fund public schools ‘from the revenue on an equitable basis’. Thus, the NNSSF uses the criteria of learner and school quintiles (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The quintile clustering of schools is in accordance with the ‘poverty of the community around the school’ (Republic of South Africa, 2011) and the school’s infrastructure (Naicker *et al.*, 2016:3). Christie (2010:701) says the NNSSF is a ‘pro-poor funding framework’. Also, Bhengu and Myende (2016:4) clarify the quintile system as the DBE’s school funding ‘formula’, according to in which the quintile criterion is: ‘the higher the quintile’ of the school, ‘the lower the level of funding the school will receive’. This implies that the lower the school’s quintile, the higher the level of funding it receives from the State. In 2007, a ‘no fee’ school policy was introduced, in terms of which learners in a ‘no fee’ school are not expected and should not be subjected to contributing any compulsory set money towards school fees (Mestry & Dzvimbo, 2011:13; Republic of South Africa, 2011) – as suggested by the phrase ‘no fee’.

Poor schools are distributed in quintiles 1, 2 and 3 and are declared to be no fee-paying schools, while the well-off schools form quintiles 4 and 5 (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014:3; Mestry, 2016:4). According to Mestry (2016:4), quintile 1 and 2 consist of schools that are in rural and township areas, while quintile 3 is formed by schools that are ‘serving middle class communities’ and some are located in inner cities. The NNSSF (Republic of South Africa, 2011) states that quintile 1 is the most poor and quintile 2 is the second poorest. Spaull (2015:34) argues that ‘poorer learners in SA perform worse academically’ and constitute the majority of SA learners (Tsukudu & Taylor, 1995:114; Spaull, 2015:36). Following Spaull, I considered the Report on the NSC Examination Results 2010 on

performance by quintile ranking (DBE, 2010:52-54). Thus, I will only provide a graphical representation of quintiles 1, 2, and 3 in the figures below.

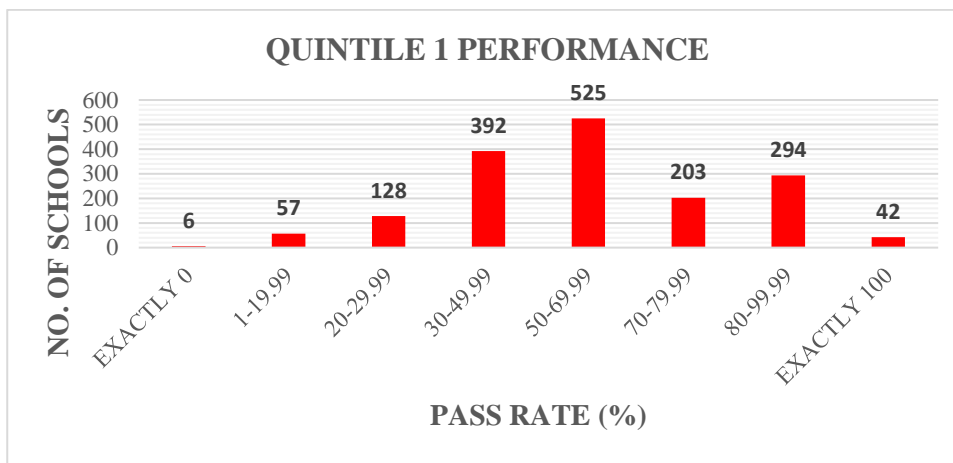


Figure 3.2.5.1 (a)

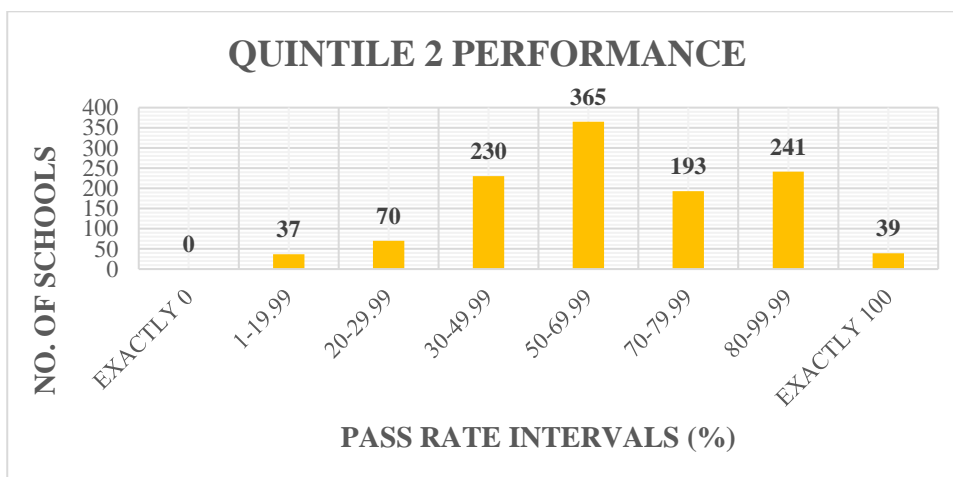


Figure 3.2.5.1 (b)

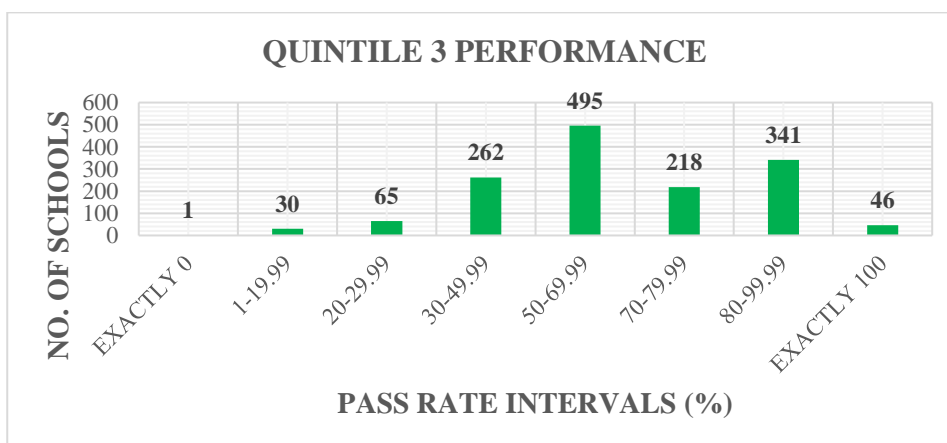


Figure 3.2.5.1 (c)

These three no fee-paying quintiles seem to share similar performance pattern. Most of these quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools perform in the 50% to 69.99 % interval (DBE, 2010:52-53), which one can consider as mediocre. Regarding schools that produced a pass rate of 40% or less for three consecutive years (2011, 2012 and 2013), the table providing this information is populated by quintiles 1, 2 and 3 (DBE, 2013:12-15), and a few whose quintiles are not accounted for.

Naicker and Mestry (2016:1) argue that previously disadvantaged learners have not improved in their academic performance. SA has failed to raise the performance of historically disadvantaged learners (Mestry & Dzvimbo, 2011; Grobler, Bisschoff, & Beeka, 2012:44). According to Tsanwani *et al.* (2013:36), mathematics performance is generally poor in rural areas. This simply means that quintiles 1, 2 and 3 are generally the poorest performing quintiles.

Kruger (2003:206) noted the poor academic results of matric learners and pointed out that the success of schools' academic outcomes is the principals' accountability. For him, '... principals can and should make a difference in the academic standards of schools'. Taole (2013:75) argues that principals are accountable for the academic performance of learners in their schools. Fomunyan (2017:108-116) also echoes the learner poor performance regarding matric results, arguing that '... effective schools require well selected individuals as principals' (Fomunyan, 2017:113) who understand and fulfil their roles as curriculum leaders. Taole (2013:75) notes that there is a need to assert principals' roles as curriculum and instructional leaders. Consequently, this research sought to understand the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders. In the next section, I move my gaze to understanding instructional leadership, starting with its origins and development.

3.3. Historical origins of instructional leadership

The concept of instructional leadership emerged in the USA (Hallinger & Lee; 2014:8; Hallinger, 2015:1) in the 1950s and 1960s (Hallinger, 2015:1). According to Hallinger (2015:2), instructional leadership emerged as an influential educational leadership concept in the 1950s – as a 'practice-based prescription' rather than a 'theory-driven' concept. Hallinger (2015:3) notes that this 'practical wisdom' was challenged by Bridges in a conceptual paper published in 1967, in which he brought up two concerns about instructional leadership. Hallinger points out that Bridges's first concern was a missing, sound conceptual definition of instructional leadership, which results in little grasp of 'behaviours and practices' linked to the role. Thus, 'without a clear conceptualization' of the then practice-based instructional leadership, principals would lack an understanding of 'how, when, and

where to employ' the practices, while researchers would be unable to develop appropriate methods to study the concept (Hallinger, 2015:3). This concern also features in Hallinger and Murphy's (1985:217) justifications for their study which aimed at building the theory of principals' instructional leadership.

The second concern that Bridges noted was the existing tension between the 'prescriptions for principals to be instructional leaders and the contextual realities of leading schools' (Hallinger 2015:3). This exists to this day. Furthermore, Hallinger asserts that the 'practical wisdom' of principals' instructional leadership could not provide dependable guidance for principals, principals' professional developers and policymakers in the 1960s and 1970s. For me, this simply means that, although there were observed and prescribed behaviours and practices, instructional leadership suffered conceptual deficiency and was found wanting. The concept of instructional leadership developed, transformed and gained significance in the 1980s by becoming a 'theoretically-grounded, research construct' through the advent of an 'effective schools movement' (Hallinger, 2015:1, 2). This advent, according to Hallinger (2015:3), was a 'quantum leap' for instructional leadership discourse. Effective school research investigated the processes, features and conditions that were identified in schools that produced more improved learner outcomes than their neighbouring schools, despite being situated in similar contexts (Hallinger, 2015:4). In 1983, Hallinger developed a conceptual framework known as the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), which is employed in assessing principals' instructional leadership (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:25; Hallinger, 2015:xv, 6). Indicators of the role of principals' instructional leadership were studied and articulated (Gowpall, 2015:34; Hallinger, 2015:4-7). From this era of enhanced research, instructional leadership developed and became a global discourse that was 'accepted as a core element of school leadership' from the 1990s to the present (Firmaningsih-Kolu, 2015:16; Hallinger, 2015:1). What can be understood from these assertions is that practice is based on a sound philosophical understanding of a concept. Since the breakthrough of the PIMRS, principals' instructional leadership has been widely studied (Hallinger, 2015:xv). In the next section I turn my attention to understanding instructional leadership.

3.3.1 Understanding the concept of instructional leadership

Instructional leadership differs from other leadership theories, since its point of focus is the direction of influence instead of how influence is carried out (Bush, 2014:3). The question is: in which direction is the influence of instructional leadership? The developments in research that associate school leaders' involvement with instruction and improved 'learner outcomes', for Bush (2014), revitalised

instructional leadership. Naicker *et al.* (2013:37) argue that good principals are fundamental to good schools, where any efforts intended to improve ‘learner achievements cannot succeed’ without principals’ leadership. Put simply, Msila (2013:81) says that schools are ‘arguably’ as effective as their principals. Naicker *et al.* (2013:137) expand on this notion and note that principals’ leadership accounts for increased learner achievements, thereby resulting in good schools because of a ‘particular brand of leadership’ by school principals, ‘that of being instructional leaders’. For me, this means that teachers, departmental heads and deputy principals can exercise instructional leadership, but not to the level of influence as that of principals as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, Taole (2023:76) contends that principals’ instructional leadership is ‘critical in [the] realisation of effective schools’, whereas Masitsa (2005:206) posits that only if the principal’s management results in effective instruction can the school be identified as effective. Again, Taole (2013:75) points out that ‘principals are more accountable for their schools’ and for their learners’ academic performance. Additionally, the Centre for Development and Enterprise ([CDE], 2014:18) argues that ‘instructional leadership is one of the most important factors affecting learner performance’. Backor and Gordon (2015) assert the positive association between principals’ instructional leadership and learner performance. I understand instructional leadership as having a direction of influence that is towards improved learner performance, hence effective schools. The question now is, what is instructional leadership?

According to Taole (2013:76), instructional leadership is a multifaceted concept, and as such different researchers describe it differently. In agreement with Taole, Geleta (2015:2) asserts that instructional leadership has different meanings for different people. These propositions suggest that there is no overarching description of instructional leadership. By implication, one can expect as many descriptions of instructional leadership as there are scholars and researchers of the concept.

So, Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaul and Armstrong (2011:8) argue that instructional leadership accentuates the role of principals as leaders of ‘curriculum coverage and teaching in the school’. This description portrays principals as actively and directly involved in curriculum delivery. Jenkins (2009:35) views instructional leadership as reflecting the actions that principals embark on to ‘promote growth in student [learner] learning’. For Jenkins (2009:36), these actions include being deeply involved in the school’s core business, teaching and learning. In the same light, Taylor (2008:5) argues that the concept of instructional leadership ‘gives priority to the roles of principals in directing schools towards effective teaching and learning’. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and the ‘behaviour of teachers in working with’ learners (DoE, 2008a:15; Bush,

2011:17). It simply means that principals' influence on learners' learning is through teachers, according to the DoE (2008a) and Bush (2011). For Bush *et al.* (2010:157), it is the quality of teaching that affects 'successful education'. Thus, a high school principal's instructional leadership is centred on leading teaching and learning, hence making him/her an instructional leader.

Furthermore, Bush *et al.* (2010:158) note that the term instructional leadership is gradually being 'replaced by the term learning-focused leadership'. Similarly, Jenkins (2009:36) argues that the recent shift from the emphasis on teaching to that of learning is resulting in some suggesting the term 'learning leader' instead of 'instructional leader'. Botha (2004:240) contends that principals today should not just be leaders of learning, but rather be 'leaders in learning'. On the other hand, Taole (2013:76) argues that prioritising learning and regarding that all other 'activities revolve around learning' is an inherent ideal in instructional leadership. Bendikson *et al.* (2012:3) describe instructional leadership as the leadership of learning. However, Gowpall (2015:35) simply refers to these as 'synonyms'. In this light, Hallinger (2015:1) asserts that 'leadership for learning' and 'learner-centered leadership' are sister constructs that sprung from the main concept, instructional leadership. He further notes that constructs arose because of growing interest in instructional leadership. Hence, this study embraces the concept of principals as instructional leaders, rather than as 'leaders of learning' or 'learning-focused leaders'.

I tend to think that conceptual knowledge that illuminates understanding is more important to underpin actions and practices. Gowpall (2015:33), in her study that investigates principals' instructional leadership practices, acknowledges 'the theoretical knowledge base behind the instructional leadership activities'. Palmer (2001:12-13) claims that the articulation of words on the subject matter and the richness of words asserted result in understanding. In the next section, I briefly focus my attention on theories of instructional leadership.

3.3.2 Theories of instructional leadership

Improvements in research approaches and some deeper digging by various scholars and researchers resulted in varying but intertwined conceptualisations of instructional leadership. 'Although researchers approach the topic of instructional leadership from various perspectives, collectively their findings suggest that it is a dynamic process' (Weber, 1987:9). The dynamic process of instructional leadership is exemplified in three theories, which include a theory based on a South African perspective, which I discuss next.

3.3.2.1 Botha's theory (2004)

Botha's (2004) theory resulted from a philosophical review of the literature. His study drew from what he refers to as 'recent best practices' regarding excellency in school leadership and 'the so-called 'new' principalship' (Botha, 2004:239). Botha's study aimed at raising and answering some questions about the 'new demands' of professional principalship in a transforming SA. The findings revealed that the 'so-called new principalship' specifically embodies instructional leadership. As instructional leaders, principals were to be engaged in direct supervision of instructional process, ensuring that their schools constantly focus on teaching and learning (Botha, 2004). Botha (2004:240) regards this to be a 'learning expert' role that requires principals to be 'lifelong learners'. Thus, Botha's theory of instructional leadership promotes the construct of 'leaders in learning' and views principals as educational leaders.

Regarding the SA context, Botha (2004:241) highlights five values which he draws from the previous studies, and he regards these as cornerstones of principal leadership. The values he recommends for principals' leadership are reflection, vision, commitment and courage, power and empowerment, and the head leader. Botha's (2004:240) theory also describes instructional leaders as expected to 'set clear expectations, maintain discipline and implement high standards' aimed at improving learning and teaching in their schools. For Botha (2004:240), the instructional leadership role requires principals to be visionary; to lead and to ensure the development of the school community; and to utilise 'more effective teaching and curricular strategies' as they support teachers. Moreover, Botha's instructional leadership theory identifies five functions, namely defining and communicating a clear mission, goals and objectives (these are set in collaboration with the staff members); managing the curriculum and instruction; supervising teaching; monitoring learning programmes; and promoting an instructional climate. So, Botha's theory of instructional leadership builds on a background of five values of the principal, and embraces five functions guided by specific expectations.

3.3.2.2 Weber's theory (1989)

Weber's (1989) instructional leadership theory is based on the ideal of shared leadership and the empowerment of 'unformal' instructional leaders within the school (Weber, 1987, 1989; Mbanjwa, 2014:30). Sharing leadership responsibilities has advantages that promote better instruction and enhance learner performance (Weber, 1987:10, 34-36). For Weber (1987:16), principals need to encourage the adoption of institutional norms that 'favour collegiality'. Bush (2011:72) describes theories that embrace collegiality as advocating for power and decision-making to be shared by the

members of the organisation. Thus, principals cannot pretend to be ‘supermen’ or ‘superwomen’, which Botha (2004:240) by implication views as expecting them to be ‘demigods’ who are experts in everything.

Furthermore, Weber’s (1989) theory shows that principals’ influence accounts for indirect effects on learners’ learning experiences. He identifies five functions that he contends have a clear influence on schools’ instructional programmes. These are defining the school’s mission; managing curriculum and instruction; promoting a positive learning climate; observing and giving feedback to teachers; and assessing the instructional program (Weber, 1989:4). Weber (1989:1) provides these instructional leadership tasks with a caution that the instructional leadership duties of principals ‘should not be overemphasised at the expense of the unofficial leadership’ found within the school.

Moreover, Weber’s theory recognises that it is not only the principal’s ‘personal characteristics’ that influences his/her enactment of instructional leadership (Weber, 1989:7). The principal’s influence on instructional leadership is also shaped by the school context and the community (Weber, 1989). According to Weber (1987:11, 1989:5), school principals are working in a ‘multilevel world’ that influences the school. He also notes that, although the ‘community may provide the frame of reference for defining a school’s mission, it is the leaders’ visions that guide the day-to-day functioning of schools’ (Weber, 1987:18). To understand how principals’ instructional leadership can affect the school’s effectiveness, one needs to study the contexts in which the principal operates (Weber, 1987:4-5). Notably, Weber’s theory is cautious of context. Weber (1989:3) describes instructional leadership as the ‘principal’s role in providing direction, resources, and support to teachers and students [learners]’ for the improvement of teaching and learning in a school. Although Weber’s theory promotes shared instructional leadership, he also emphasises the principal’s role as an instructional leader.

3.3.2.3 Hallinger and Murphy’s theory (1985): PIMRS model of instructional leadership

According to Hallinger and Lee (2014:10), this theory was developed by Hallinger and Murphy in 1985 using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) framework. It is a three-dimensional theory used to describe and measure principals’ instructional leadership role (Hallinger & Lee, 2014:10). According to Hallinger and Lee (2014:11), the PIMRS theory and the PIMRS tool are ‘widely applied’ in empirical studies of principals’ instructional leadership. For me, this implies that the role of a principal as an instructional leader matters, hence it is studied increasingly.

PIMRS theory suggests three broad dimensions that comprise principals' instructional leadership role, namely defining the school's mission; managing the instructional programme; and promoting a positive school learning climate (Hallinger, 1985:220-221; Hallinger & Lee, 2014:10). The three key dimensions are further delineated into ten instructional leadership duties of principals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985:221) . These are outlined in Figure 3.3.2.3 (a) below.

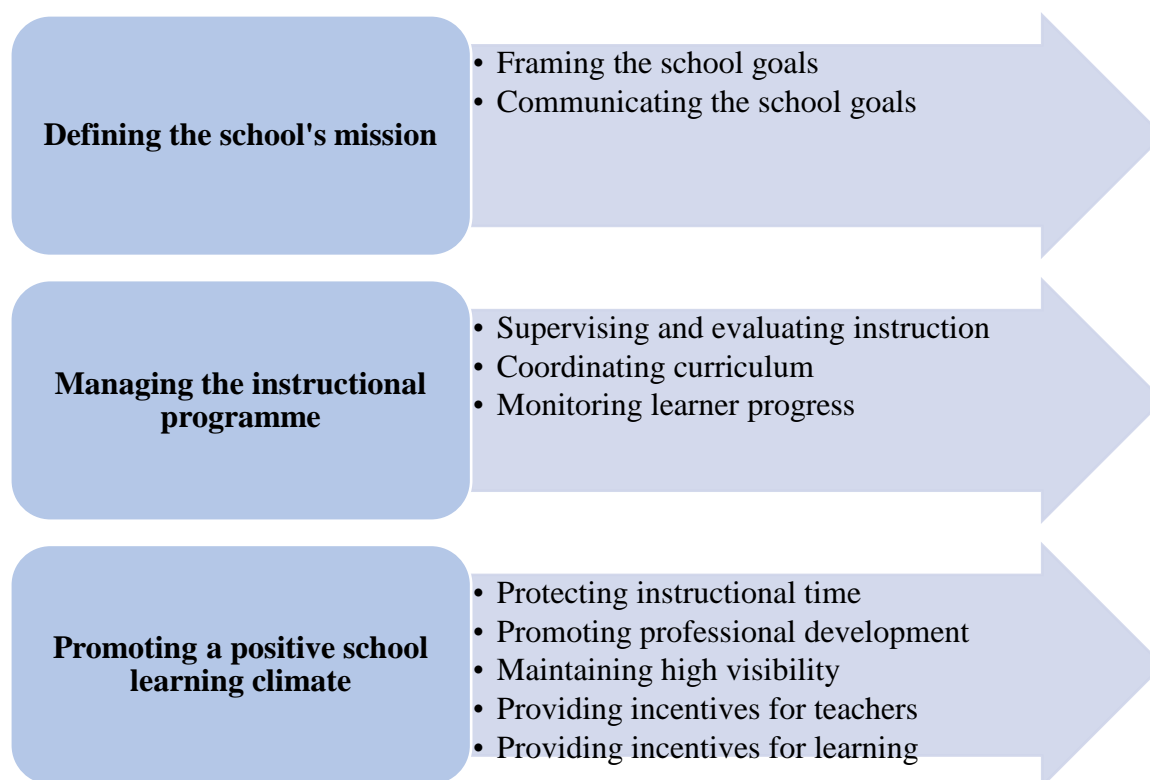


Figure 3.3.2.3 (a) Principal's instructional leadership role dimensions and their associated duties

The first dimension, for Hallinger and Lee (2014:10), does not necessary means that the principal will state the school's mission alone. However, it does points out that it is the principal's role responsibility to ensure that his/her school 'has a clear mission' that focuses on the 'academic progress' of the learners (Hallinger & Lee, 2014:10). Although the principal may have worked with the staff when defining the school's mission and framing the goals, it is however his/her responsibility to communicate these goals, which will influence the direction of all stakeholders towards the realisation of those goals.

Hallinger and Lee (2014:10) emphasise that 'the framework [the PIMRS theory] assumes that coordination and control of the academic program of the school remains a key leadership responsibility of the principal'. So, the concept of managing the instructional programme must be traced back to the school principal if one needs to verify its rationality and dependability. The third

dimension is much broader, and principals who become successful in implementing it ‘create an academic press and a culture that fosters and rewards learning and improvement’ (Hallinger & Lee, 2014:11).

This discussion of the selected instructional leadership theories has shed light and given useful insights on understanding the concept of instructional leadership. Importantly, delving into these theories has provided insights into different meanings of instructional leadership as a concept, which will assist in drawing out the meanings of high school principals’ roles as instructional leaders.

3.4 ROLES ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AS INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERS

As stated earlier, in section 3.2.4, ‘a poorly managed organisation with a strong charismatic leader may soar briefly – only to crash shortly thereafter’; whereas, an ‘over managed and under led’ organisation ultimately loses its sense of purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2017:x). I tend to think that the same can be said of any organised system with diverse but overlapping functions, like the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders. This simply means that it does not help much for high school principals to trust only one dimension of their expertise, probably the one that they believe to be their strength, as this would compromise the whole concept of their role as instructional leaders in the long run.

In this thesis I argue that high school principals as instructional leaders ought to understand their roles as both leaders and managers of instruction. That is, they must lead and manage teaching and learning to ensure school improvement. In the light of this, I therefore try to align the instructional leadership role, which requires management, and the one that needs the principal’s leadership dimensions, hence high school principals’ **roles** as instructional leaders. The DoE (2008a:15) refers to instructional leaders as leaders who exercise their influence on teaching and learning through modelling, monitoring and dialogue. Regarding monitoring, Bush (2011:18) posits that it encompasses ‘visiting classrooms, observing teachers at work and providing them with feedback’. On the other hand, Jenkins (2009:36) argues that, in order to appreciate the problems that some teachers and learners experience, principals as instructional leaders ‘need to know what is going on in the classroom’. The dual purpose of a principal’s role as an instructional leader can be perceived in this notion. The monitoring activity would require principals to have a clear monitoring plan and monitoring tool(s), which then suggests a management role of a principal as instructional leader. Giving feedback to teachers, on the other hand, calls for leadership skills. Christie (2010:198) asserts that principals as

managers have a responsibility for ‘total quality management’ and ‘strategic management’. This further proposes that high school principals should be knowledgeable of the quality of the ‘product’, namely education (Gunter, 2001:19), which is delivered through teaching and learning in schools.

From a different perspective, to draw up a monitoring plan and designing a monitoring tool require the principal’s innovative ability. According to Mestry (2013:119), a principal is required to ‘take an innovative role as an instructional leader who possesses the requisite skills, capacity and commitment to lead an effective school’. This implies that high school principals as instructional leaders need to be innovative. Concerning modelling, Bush (2011:17) describes it as being ‘about [the] power of example’. Based on the expertise, competences and characteristics of a leader discussed earlier, I believe that modelling and dialogue require principals to assume the position of a leader. Modelling is ‘about [the] power of example’ and has the power to influence the being and direction of a school. In other words, whether the school becomes effective or not, and whether it adopts a culture of continuous improvement or regression, is largely dependent on the ‘personal values’ and ‘moral capabilities’ (Bush *et al.*, 2010:4) of the principal as instructional leader. These qualities that the principal needs to display are not of a self-serving kind, but rather articulate his/her belief in quality and his/her commitment to the leadership role as an instructional leader. To exemplify the power of modelling, if the principal is not punctual, he/she sets a tone of unpunctuality for both teachers and learners; if he/she does not need to verbalise or put that in writing, it will soon be a norm. Dialogue, on the other hand, is about creating opportunities for conversation about teaching and learning among teachers and between teachers and their leaders (Bush, 2011:18). I believe that, for high school principals as instructional leaders, giving feedback to teachers about the classroom visit or sitting in a ‘pre-visit’ conference with a teacher are examples of creating opportunities of dialogue. As noted earlier, leaders must have a kind of integrity that creates trust to ‘facilitate communication and mediate conflict’ (Bennis, 2009:xxiii). It is not unusual that these principal-teacher conversations reflecting on the classroom visit express contradictory ideas, but the trust between the principal and teacher mediates the conflict.

Furthermore, Bush *et al.* (2009:163) argue that principals who focus strongly on instructional leadership are associated with duties that include managing the curriculum across the school, evaluating learner performance by scrutinising examination results and internal assessments, monitoring the work of departmental heads (HoDs) by evaluating their plans and portfolios, ‘ensur[ing] that HoDs monitor the work of educators within their learning areas’, and ensuring the availability of appropriate learning and teaching support material (LTSM). As Bush (2007:392) argues, ‘the concept of management overlaps with that of leadership’. Thus, the characteristics of the

principals' roles as instructional leaders are a clear-cut example of Bush's notion. It seems there is a recurring intersection of management functions and leadership responsibilities in high school principals' instructional leadership.

Bipath and Mafuwane (2015:172) find four instructional dimensions, of which '(m)onitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process' is the best indicator of instructional leadership. The other three instructional leadership dimensions that were revealed in their findings are promoting frequent and appropriate school-wide teacher development activities; defining and communicating a shared vision and goal; and managing the curriculum and instruction (Bipath & Mafuwane, 2015:167-169). The teacher developments that Bipath and Mafuwane (2015:164) are referring to are the on-site development initiated by the principal as an instructional leader. According to Backor and Gordon (2015:106), in high-performing schools, principals are sought by 'teachers for instructional guidance' and they participate actively in staff development. In agreement with this notion, Jenkins (2009:36) contends that principals as instructional leaders need to be 'instructional resources'. For him, teachers need to rely on their principals as resources of instructional practices. This notion, I think, also calls for leadership and management expertise in a principal. The principal cannot give packaged prescriptions when developing teachers; he/she needs to be innovative and be a good communicator who keeps abreast of knowledge and understanding of instructional aspects.

The findings of the qualitative study by Themane *et al.* (2017:8762) on high school principals reveal that female principals are inspired by three core values, namely collaboration, commitment and common purpose, and that they play a more substantial role in managing curriculum implementation than their male counterparts. Managing curriculum implementation falls under the role of managing curriculum and instruction in Botha's (2004) theory of instructional leadership, and is implied to fall in the domain of managing instructional programmes as it relates to coordinating the curriculum in Hallinger and Murphy's theory. Again, curriculum implementation indicates a need for both leadership and management skills in principals. For me, the fact that female principals were found in Themane *et al.*'s (2017) study to play a significant role in managing curriculum implies that they play a significant role as instructional leaders.

In this section, I have discussed the roles of high school principals as instructional leaders. I have argued and illustrated that high school principals have both management and leadership roles to fulfil if they understand their roles as instructional leaders. In the next section, I analyse the concept of the principals' role as instructional leaders (PRasIL), referring to the discussed theories of instructional leadership and the roles associated with high school principals as instructional leaders.

3.5 ANALYSING THE CONCEPT OF PRasIL

My analysis of PRasIL draws on the concepts that arise from the functions linked to the roles of high school PRasIL. I now look for words that are used together with the concept PRasIL in the form of the responsibilities of principals as instructional leaders. First, the basic condition that applies to PRasIL is the focus on teaching and learning. Msila (2013:81) writes, ‘(i)nstructional leaders know that successful leadership is the one that supports teaching and learning’. It is the goal of instructional leadership to facilitate the improvement of teaching and learning (Backor & Gordon, 2015:105). The CDE (2014:15) asserts that, as instructional leaders, principals are expected to provide leadership in designing policies, procedures and processes that are focused on facilitating ‘effective and efficient’ curriculum delivery. Jenkins (2009:36) mentions three areas of education that principals as instructional leaders need to be conversant in, namely curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Taole (2013:76) contends that instructional leaders focus their ‘attention on the control, coordination and supervision of all teaching and learning activities’. She further asserts that instructional leaders are involved in setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans and evaluating teachers. Similarly, Le Fevre and Robinson (2015:59) provide a set of practices that principals as instructional leaders are involved in, viz. setting and communicating academic goals; providing the necessary resources; planning, coordinating and evaluating the quality of teaching and the curriculum; participating in and promoting teacher learning; and ensuring that the school environment is safe and supportive for both staff and learners. According to them, principals as instructional leaders ‘[seek] to improve the most powerful school-based determinants of student [learner] achievement – namely the quality of teaching and curriculum’.

Mestry (2017:1) also provides responsibilities of principals as instructional leaders. For him, instructional leadership entails curriculum supervision, improving the school’s instructional programme, working with staff in stating the school’s vision and mission, and building a close relationship with the community. Concerning the activity of improving the school’s instructional programme, Balkrishen and Mestry (2016:35) argue that ‘instructional leaders make instructional mastery appealing to staff and help create a rigorous and supportive instructional climate where good teaching and learning can thrive’. This search for words or concepts that are used with PRasIL, as in principals’ responsibilities inherent in PRasIL, caused me to re-reflect on the concept of instructional leadership, before attempting to identify the concepts that are used with PRasIL. Connecting to the work of scholars and researchers in the field which is carried in richness of the words they use and

revealed in the coherence of their arguments made me to ask this question again: what is instructional leadership? This time I encountered Hoadley and Ward (2009:10), who argue that there are broad and narrow perspectives of instructional leadership. For them, a broad perspective considers school organisation and teacher cultures, while the narrow view focuses on principals' actions that influence learners' learning. This made things clearer to me, as it pointed out that my interest is in the narrow perspective of principals' instructional leadership. My horizon was broadened once again. Therefore, I looked for a description of instructional leadership that is aligned to the narrow perspective. I came across Reitzug and West (2008:695), who view the narrow perspective as the traditional role of a principal as an instructional leader. They assert that this role is described in terms of communicating high expectations for teachers and learners; supervising instruction; monitoring assessment and learner progress; coordinating the school's curriculum; promoting a climate for learning; and creating a supportive work environment. This further broadened my horizon; I was enlightened.

According to Hirst and Peters (1998:33), '(t)he point of conceptual analysis is to get clearer about the types of distinction that words have developed to designate'. They safeguard the undertaking of this exercise by saying that appreciating the point of conceptual analysis also implies that the inability to develop a 'neat set of logically necessary conditions for the use of a word ...is not necessarily the hall-mark of failure'. I therefore safely proceeded to identify words or concepts that are used with PRasIL by asking myself a question: how do we know when high school principals manage and lead instruction? With reference to this discussion and the previous ones, it appears that PRasIL is shaped by concepts such as to monitor and control curriculum delivery; coordinate and supervise teaching and learning; evaluate and improve instruction; allocate necessary resources to enhance instruction; promote self and teacher development; create and improve a supportive instructional environment; set and communicate clear academic goals; monitor assessment and learner progress; state the school's vision and mission; and '[build] relationship with the community'. These are concepts that discriminate PRasIL, particularly in the narrow approach of the principals' instructional leadership, from other constructs of education leadership. For example, they distinguish PRasIL from the instructional leadership of teachers, HoDs and deputy principals. These concepts also distinguish PRasIL from transactional leadership and transformational leadership (O'Donoghue & Clarke, 2010:58).

I established in section **3.3.1** that the ends of instructional leadership are to improve learner academic performance. In this view, Taole's (2013:76-77) conceptualisation of PRasIL implies that instructional leadership concerns itself with teaching development and the improvement of learner performance. In the next section I take a look at PRasIL and the school's academic performance.

3.6 PRasIL AND SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

According to Bipath and Mafuwane (2015:163), instructional leadership emphasises principal's influence on student achievement. They further posit that instructional leadership could be remedy to challenges that South African principals are confronted with, which include 'establishing culture of teaching and learning'; 'maintaining high education standards' and improving learner performance (Bipath & Mafuwane, 2015:164). On the other hand, Mathibe (2007:523) argues that, due to the absence of professional development for principals, they lack the necessary expertise to manage and lead, which is one reason for the 'poor results' in schools. For me, Mathibe's assertion implies PRasIL for two reasons. First, the managing and leading of principals he is referring to affects schools' academic results. I align this with Le Fevre and Robinson's assertion in the previous section, where they noted that in, schools where PRasIL are in place, there seems to be a level of learner success. Second, I have argued, with justifications from the literature, that PRasIL require principals to act as both managers and leaders in fulfilling their roles as instructional leaders. Thus, it seems there is a noticeable correlation between PRasIL and learners' academic performance. That is, if high school principals were operating in a closed system, I would theorise without reluctance that excellent PRasIL is an input for excellent learner academic performance, the output.

However, high school principals are not operating in an isolated system. There are factors shaping their articulations and enactment of their roles as instructional leaders. They 'operate in a multi-level context' (Weber, 1987:11). Does this justify indecisiveness by principals to articulate their roles as instructional leaders? Can one use this to justify underperformance in matric results, particularly in the so-called previously disadvantaged high schools in SA? My answer to these questions is 'no'. Instructional leadership considers the context in which the principal is working, but as Bennis (2009:41) confidently writes, leaders 'master the context' while managers 'surrender to it'. I am led to think that high school principals need to be more of leaders than managers to achieve the goal of instructional leadership, namely a continuous improvement in learner academic performance.

Heystek (2016:1) argues that leadership is itself contextual. He further asserts that there are exceptional schools that perform against all odds. This is not to endorse the inequalities in provisioning of resources, which has a known history (Naicker *et al.*, 2013:138; Maringe & Moletsane, 2015:349-351; Heystek, 2016:1). Not when Maringe and Moletsane (2015:347-349) draw our attention to the phenomenon of leading schools that face 'multiple deprivation'. But Heystek, believes that, 'even in disadvantaged contexts' (Naicker *et al.*, 2016:1), 'leaders do not submit to

pressure of challenges'; rather, they seek solutions instead of excuses (Heystek, 2016:1; Naicker *et al.*, 2016:1). The principal's position is attached to an imperative demand, that of ensuring that the needed 'academic results are produced' in his/her school (Heystek, 2011:5). Heystek mentions the diverse contexts in which principals work, ranging from the finest facilities and best resources to a shack where the office is the car boot; but still they are expected to lead and manage to attain the academic results.

For Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007:431), 'good school leadership leads to good school results'. For me, this means that high school principals' articulations of their roles as instructional leaders have both significance and meaning for the learners' academic performance. I now focus my attention on constructing the meanings of PRasIL in the next section.

3.7 CONSTRUCTING MEANINGS OF PRasIL

One of my research aims is to elucidate PRasIL as articulated by high school principals, rather than to observe their execution (Fay, 1987). This suggests that I will not be asking questions that seek to find out how or why principals perform certain practices. According to Fay (1975:75), a social act is grounded in social rules shared by a particular society and describes 'what is to count as doing' that particular act. He further says that these rules 'logically constitute the very possibility of a particular action being said to occur' (Fay, 1975:75). That is, a certain type of action cannot occur in the absence of 'certain rules'. He refers to this set of rules as 'constitutive meanings' (Fay, 1975:76). Put simply, Van Wyk (2006:182) says 'constitutive meanings are presuppositions of activities' giving conditions for the occurrence of a particular social action.

This brief discussion on constitutive meanings has made things clearer to me. When I was writing my research proposal I neither understood the difference, nor perceived that there was any, between constitutive meanings and meanings. I ended up using constitutive meanings for PRasIL which I could not describe, let alone justify its use. Fay (1987:69) gives two of levels analysis, of which one intends to find the true meaning of what people do and are. This level, for me, is concerned with how people understand themselves in their world. That is, these are meanings that high school principals have and articulate to inform their roles as instructional leaders.

Thus, Taylor (1985:22) analyses the concept of 'meaning' as one satisfying the three articulations. First, a meaning for a subject, which I understand to refer to the meaning of PRasIL for principals. That is, what meaning does PRasIL have for high school principals, the sense that it makes to them.

Second is the meaning of something; this articulation enables us to distinguish PRasIL and its meanings from other concepts. This is accomplished by recognising the underlying meanings of PRasIL. Third, things have meaning only in the field, and in relation to the meanings of other things. That is, meanings can be identified in relation to other meanings. This suggests that the meanings of PRasIL underlie and shape practices relating to the concept of PRasIL what it is identified to be.

So, prompted by Taylor and like Kabende (2015:86), I identify the meanings of PRasIL. Therefore, following the literature review and in line with the conceptual analysis, I construct the meanings of RRasIL. Below are the constructed meanings of PRasIL:

- Monitoring and controlling curriculum delivery
- Coordinating and supervising teaching and learning
- Promoting self and teacher development
- Evaluating and improving instruction
- Allocating the necessary resources
- Creating and improving a supportive learning and teaching environment
- Setting and communicating clear academic goals
- Monitoring assessment and learner progress
- Promoting an instructional climate
- Stating the school's vision and mission
- Establishing a relationship with the community

Then, following Van Wyk (2003:153), I 'cluster' the eleven meanings and construct three meanings for my study. Thus, PRasIL, for this research, consist mainly of:

1. Stating the school's vision and mission;
2. Managing the instructional programme; and
3. Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning.

These three specific meanings can also be understood in relation to their sub-meanings. Stating the school's vision and mission has two sub-meanings, namely framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals. Managing the instructional programme consists of three sub-meanings, which are supervising and evaluating instruction; coordinating the curriculum; and monitoring learner progress. Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning can be understood in relation to five sub-meanings, viz. protecting instructional time; maintaining high visibility; promoting professional development; providing incentives for teachers; and providing incentives for learning. Next, I discuss the meanings that I have constructed for my study.

3.7.1 Stating the school's vision and mission

Vision identifies the school's intended destination, while mission points out a 'purposeful journey' (Masitsa, 2005:212). This statement was aired by one of the effective school principals in Masitsa's research study that investigated the role of a principal in restoring a learning culture in township schools. Put differently, a vision is what we are aspiring to, what we would like to be as a school, while a mission focuses the school on the values and beliefs of the school community and normally emerges from a clear vision (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:29). For Geleta (2015:3), this has to be a clear academic mission through which the principal influences the school's effectiveness. This assertion suggests that the vision and mission statement of the school map both the purpose and the direction of that school.

So, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:29) asserts that schools must be led according to the purpose of the school, and the school's purpose must be 'articulated in the school's vision statement ...'. The schooling purpose is teaching and learning (Bipath & Mafuwane, 2015:164). On the other hand, Hallinger and Lee (2014:10) assert that the school's mission must be clear and focussed on the 'academic progress' of its learners. For me, this means that, what the school stands for must be captured in its vision and mission. As such, it is the responsibility of a principal, working with the staff, to identify the school's vision and to ensure that its vision and mission statement are in place (Hallinger & Lee, 2014:10; Mestry, 2017:1). This gives rise to a 'shared vision' (DoE, 2008:23; Grobler, 2014:876; Geleta, 2015:3; DBE, 2015; Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015:382; Marishane, 2015:194-195). Moloi (2005:56) views a shared vision as 'an all-compassing world view' which yields a progressive and sustainable commitment in the school. For Gunter (2001:35), shared vision and goals result in 'unity in purpose' and 'consistency in practice'. On the other hand, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:29) argues that the mission belongs to the school community and it is a consensus statement that incorporates its collective vision. This implies that the school community must have ownership of the school vision and mission.

Mestry (2017:1) and Hallinger (2018:9-10) recently extended the notion of community to encompass the community in which the school is. Mestry (2017:1) contends that the instructional leadership of a principal includes 'building a close relationship with the community', while Hallinger asserts that the principal's instructional leadership is adapted in response to the needs of the community context in which he/she works. This was also captured by Bhengu and Myende (2016:6), who say that principals act regarding the aspirations of the communities around their schools. In support, Gunter

(2001:19) asserts, by implication, that a school is not a commercial anarchy where communities are denied the opportunity to clarify their ‘needs and priorities that are monitored, revisable and accountable to the public’. What I gather here is that high school principals as instructional leaders must consider the valuable interests of the community and also regard all their contexts when developing the school’s vision and mission. This means that the school’s vision and mission need to be aligned with the national and provincial policies, yet responsive to the immediate community needs, while asserting the school’s purpose and its imagined ends. For me, this is where principals influence the school’s direction without leaving behind the community in which the school is.

Moonsamy-Koopasammy (2012:30) suggests that the mission assists in providing scope for principals as instructional leaders and their schools to address crucial questions, such as:

- Who are we as a school?
- What do we want to strive to become?
- Who do we serve?
- What are the needs of those that we serve?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- Where are we headed?
- How will we know when we have arrived?

For me, it seems that the vision and mission form the basic philosophy of the school’s ‘being’ and of the community it is serving.

3.7.1.1 Framing the goals

Principals as instructional leaders should frame effective instructional goals and set academic standards for their schools (Murphy, 1983:140). According to Geduld and Sathorar (2016:3), leaders inspire and motivate their followers by articulating a ‘compelling vision’ and ‘attractive goals’. A vision should inspire the attainment of goals by all who are in pursuit (Mestry, 2017:4). The ‘overriding goal’ in effective schools is the improvement of learner success (Murphy, 1983:140). For me, this marks the beginning of effective communication by principals as instructional leaders; that is, when PRasIL is manifested in articulating a meaningful vision, high academic standards and sense-making goals. But what are goals?

Soanes and Stevenson (2009:609) describe a goal as the desired result or the destination of a journey. Regarding teaching, goals can be ‘broad and diverse’, capable of being achieved through different approaches (DoE, 2008a:29). According to Grobler *et al.* (2012:42), educational leaders’ primary

goal is teaching and learning. On the one hand, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:30) argues that the school goals should stem from the vision and mission of the school. She further asserts that effective principals as instructional leaders should identify and clearly state the academic goals which then influences academic outcomes. In agreement, Grobler *et al.* (2012:43) posit that principals need to promote ‘a moral enterprise’ by facilitating shared goals ‘that can be translated into improved learner performance ...’. In consideration of these arguments, it appears that academic goals are consistent with the ends of PRasIL, as stated earlier, namely the improvement of learner academic performance. Therefore, high school principals as instructional leaders need to frame instructional goals that facilitate instructional needs (Backor & Gordon, 2015:106) – goals that shape and improve learner achievements (Balkrishen & Mestry, 2016:33). The way I understand the framing of school goals is that principals frame instructional goals from the school’s vision and mission, which are a collective entity. The instructional goals are directed at improving learners’ academic performance in the school. As these goals assert the desired ends, close monitoring of achievements against these stated aims is of great importance. Improving the quality of teaching and learning, hence the improvement of the school’s academic achievement, is an infinite pursuit. Thus, high school principals as instructional leaders cannot cease to frame and re-examine instructional goals. They should keep questioning the status quo, constantly interpreting the present in determining the relevance and in pursuit of future meanings.

3.7.1.2 Communicating the school’s goals

Bennis (2009:xxxi) maintains that leaders know what they want and why they want it, and how to communicate to others what they want so as to solicit their cooperation and support. Moloi (2005:56) refers to Martin Luther King Jr. to exemplify the power that can be generated by leaders who communicate a compelling vision. Moreover, Bennis (2009:188) asserts that ‘(a) dream that is not understood remains a mere occurrence. Understood, it becomes a living experience’. In the same light, Murphy (1983:143) contends that school goals and standards will be of no value if they are not clearly and consistently communicated to staff, learners and parents. Khoza (2016:5) therefore believes that understanding the school’s vision and goals facilitates willingness to achieve them while engendering competences to improve.

Learning goals must be clear, understood and shared (DoE, 2008a:94) by all stakeholders. This is a key route for high school principals to communicate the school goals, I believe. For me, shared goals make everyone (learners, parents, staff) have ownership of the goals, and in turn they can communicate them to others. High school principals as instructional leaders need to ensure that the

school goals are understood. The way to make people understand is to communicate goals that have meaning to them. The goals need not be ‘far-fetched’; they must be realistic in the school’s context and be connected to the desired change. That is, they must assert the language of academic improvement that is meaningful to the school and its community. ‘Being that can be understood is language’ (Gadamer, 1975:xxxiii).

Furthermore, high school principals should develop instructional policies that articulate the instructional and academic goals and initiate processes to realise them (Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:30). These instructional policies are a school’s official guiding reference to instructional matters, and every school structure (Learner Representative Council (LRC), subject departments, subject committees, school governing body (SGB), etc.) must keep a copy. In this manner, the principal as an instructional leader influences every sphere of his/her school to make teaching and learning, hence academic performance, a priority. Principals can also communicate the vision through parents’ meetings and newsletters, and through handbooks, school assemblies, staff meetings, bulletin boards, and when having conversations with staff or learners (Moloi, 2005:57; Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:30). The same platforms that are suggested to communicate the school’s vision are also relevant in communicating the school’s goals.

Lastly, Moloi (2005:57) claims that the powerful medium of communicating the school’s vision for principals is that ‘you behave in ways that are consistent with the vision of your school’, incorporating it into their ‘hour-to-hour activities’. Similarly, Hallinger (2005:224) upholds that the ‘(v)ision, goals, and mission become strongly situated in the vocabulary of principals who wish to succeed’ in making their schools effective. He further asserts that principals as effective instructional leaders align the school activities and plans with the academic mission of the school. Notably, Hallinger (2005:224) maintains that principals as instructional leaders focus ‘not only on leading, but also on managing’. Next, I cast my gaze on the role of managing the instructional programme as the second meaning I constructed for my study.

3.7.2 Managing the instructional programme

Managing the instructional programme is centred on the ‘coordination and control of instruction and curriculum’; while it integrates three leadership meanings (Hallinger, 2005:226). This further exemplifies that high school principals as instructional leaders serve a ‘dual purpose’, as managers and leaders. Managing the instructional programme calls for the principals’ direct interaction with teachers’ and learners’ work. It seeks their involvement in classroom activities, so as to understand

both the teachers' and learners' difficulties that need motivation, development, and support in material form. Thus, principals as instructional leaders are 'unafraid' to work directly with teachers when it comes to improving teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005:224) in their schools.

However, Firmaningsih-Kolu, (2015:21) caution that principals need to have high proficiency in teaching and learning and must be committed to improve the school's effectiveness. Similarly, Taole (2013:76) argues that the instructional context is ever changing, so principals should remain informed of instructional developments. She exemplifies this notion by noting knowledge of the integration of technologies in teaching and learning as one aspect of instructional development that is of significance to principals as instructional leaders. This suggests that principals need to be leading their own learning in order to manage the curriculum and lead learning.

3.7.2.1 Supervising and evaluating instruction

According to Thakral (2015:79), the word 'supervision' generally means overseeing or superintending, or guiding others' activities with the intent of their improvement. Instructional supervision focuses on the assessment of academic facets linked to the school's continuous improvement through enhancing teaching and learning (Thakral, 2015:80). Osakwe (2016:178) agrees, describing supervision as a means of 'stimulating, guiding, improving, refreshing, encouraging and overseeing' others, trusting on their cooperation for the success of supervision. These assertions suggest that principals as instructional leaders need to gain the trust of their teachers, and to be available for support and development, rather than being on a 'fault-finding mission'.

Supervision is essential in monitoring teachers' performance, and examining strengths and weaknesses with the intent of giving support and development to address weaknesses, while encouraging improvement in strengths, thereby reinforcing the achievement of school goals (Murphy, 1983:142; Osakwe, 2016:178; Iileka, 2017:48). Instructional supervision is central in instructional leadership (Murphy, 1983:142; Backor & Gordon, 2015:111; Iileka, 2017:48), so principals must be 'deeply engaged' in supervising and monitoring teaching and learning in their schools (Gawlik, 2018:4). Iileka, 2017:48) notes that the lack of supervision impacts negatively on learner performance. Supervision assists in evaluating whether teaching and learning, and classroom objectives, are consistent with the asserted school goals and standards towards the imagined destination, the vision (Murphy, 1983:142; Iileka, 2017:48). If not, that is where support features. Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2005:7) describe 'SuperVision' as a term that denotes a 'common vision of what teaching can and should be' when developed collaboratively. For them, it

also infers that the school vision will be achieved collaboratively. This implies that supervision is conducted with teachers, rather than being conducted on teachers.

On the other hand, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:34) posits that the ‘supervision and evaluation of teachers’ performances is a very contentious issue’. She justifies this notion by pointing out that supervision is subjective, meaning that it depends on the evaluator to a great extent. I agree with her. However, if supervision is based on the shared vision, guided by the collective goals and well-articulated academic standards, and is finely planned and communicated, I think the contentious part can be nullified.

Additionally, Murphy (1983:142) advises that, when working with teachers, principals should be actively involved in designing evaluation procedures and the criteria for the evaluation process. He further asserts the importance of conducting instructional reviews using lesson plans and learners’ work (workbooks, tests, etc.). The principal needs to give feedback to teachers after a supervision exercise. Well-prepared feedback that acknowledges specific strengths while addressing weakness (Iileka, 2017:48; Murphy, 1983:142) provided in a democratic manner avoids conflict. Feedback that caters for teachers’ needs assist teachers to configure their teaching approaches (Gawlik, 2018:21). According to Iileka (2017:48), feedback may be written or be in the form of a ‘formal discussion’. Thus, for Backor and Gordon (2015:110), supervision should be a process of engaging teachers in dialogue about their teaching in a non-critical and non-judgemental manner, for instructional improvement. For me, if high school principals as instructional leaders can provide feedback to teachers in a dialogue setting, it is possible that teachers may feel a sense of caring and equality, with distinct responsibilities, which will then consolidate mutual trust that they are not under inspection.

Thakral (2015:60), who affirms that supervision contributes to the improvement of teaching and learning, learner achievement, and teacher growth and development, makes a distinction between supervision and inspection. For Thakral, supervision is aimed at assisting teachers to improve their instruction, while inspection is directed at checking on teachers’ work; where weakness is identified, they are cautioned critically. On the other hand, Moswela and Mphale, (2015:62) note that the inspective kind of supervision lacks ‘supervisee growth’. It is necessary that high school principals as instructional leaders grasp the concept of supervision and the evaluation of instruction to carry this task out meaningfully, rather than to be caught up in an ‘investigatory exercise’ (Moswela, 2010:74) of inspection duties that instigate suspicion and brew conflicts while compromising the good course of events. Thakral (2015:81) provides distinctions between supervision and inspection, which include the ones shown in **Figure 3.7.2.1 (a)**.

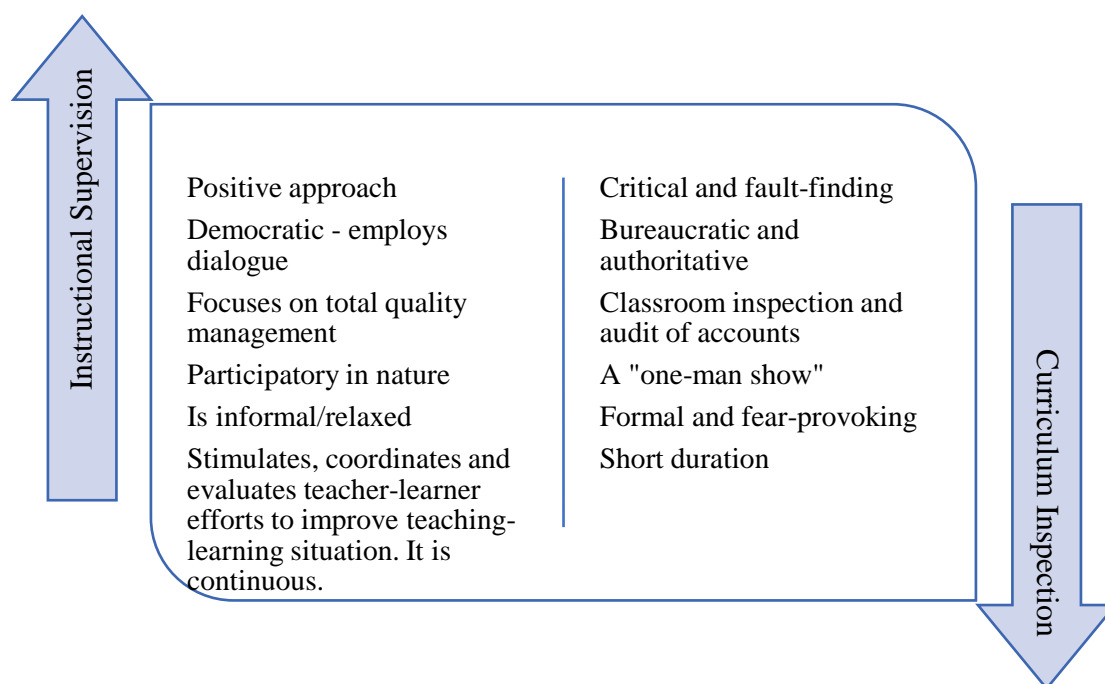


Figure 3.7.2.1 (a) Some distinctions between supervision and inspection

3.7.2.2 Coordinating the curriculum

Iileka (2017:50) argues that this role of principals seeks to ensure that teachers teach according to what the curriculum stipulates. I understand Iileka as saying that principals as instructional leaders need to ensure that teachers teach according to national subject policies, and assess learners according to national assessment policies. Iileka further makes a notable statement, that if principals do not fulfil this role, the likelihood is that teachers may not attend to all the concepts required by the subject policy, or even may teach concepts that are not prescribed by the curriculum. For Iileka, this leads directly to learners' poor academic performance. High school principals as instructional leaders cannot ignore this role, particularly in the light of ever-changing curriculum policies.

In coordinating the curriculum, principals need to familiarise themselves with all the curriculum policies of the subjects in their schools; they need to be reading persons. High school principals as instructional leaders must ensure that all teachers have the necessary curriculum documents and other relevant texts, e.g. circulars concerning curriculum adjustments. According to Murphy (1983:141), principals can facilitate curriculum coordination in three ways. The first one is to confirm that there is consistency in both the basic and supplementary resources that the school uses and that they are relevant. For example, teachers should not be using curriculum documents of the long phased-out curriculum. Secondly, Murphy suggests that principals need to certify that 'curriculum content is

consistent with instructional objectives' and the criteria for achieving those objectives. According to Murphy, the principal has to validate the curriculum in his coordination. For me, this simply means that high school principals as instructional leaders need to understand curriculum planning, and assess and evaluate it for improvement. Murphy further notes that this curriculum validation has been shown to improve learner achievement. Lastly, principals need to launch a programme of evaluation procedures that occurs on regular basis (Murphy, 1983:141). Evaluating the instructional programme needs a clear plan and good communication of procedures to the teachers. Moreover, the criteria of evaluation must be aligned with the school's goal and must seek to determine how far the school has fared in achieving them and identify where they need to be reinforced.

3.7.2.3 Monitoring learner progress

According to Hallinger and Murphy (1986:7), the continuous monitoring of learner progress is the key function of principals as instructional leaders. Principals as instructional leaders need to make use of various types of information produced as learning products, for example learner workbooks, tests and examinations, to assess the effectiveness of the instructional programme and to mark the progress towards achieving the school's academic goals (Hallinger & Murphy 1986:7). This exercise is built upon curriculum coordination, in which the principal confirms the instructional objectives and the criteria to measure the specific objectives in question.

Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:38) argues that instructional leaders should make informed decisions based on various data and research. For her, these decisions concern planning strategies for continuous instructional improvement and accountability for what is going on in their schools. That is, high school principals need to analyse learner progress so that the details can tell where each subject is doing well and where exactly it is struggling. Upon identification of these areas, we may inquire of the source, which then informs decisions about the type of learning or teaching interventions that are deemed appropriate. Thus, Moonsammy-Koopasammy urges that data on learner performance should be analysed in depth rather than 'superficially', as it informs instructional practices.

Hallinger and Murphy (1986:7) moreover claim that sustained monitoring and consistent feedback to learner and teachers enhance the value of accountability. Learners are accountable for their learning, that is, they need to lead their own learning. O'Donoghue and Clark (2010:70) refer to this as learners' self-regulated learning. Thus, analysing their academic progress prompts their accountability. On the other hand, Reddy *et al.* (2015:27) describe teaching as the practice of planning and executing

systematic learning. So, teachers need to establish whether or not the learners are learning systematically, and whether they are progressing or whether the teaching strategies are effective (Reddy *et al.*, 2015:28). Thus, learner performance data is needed and is of help to principals, parents, teachers and learners. For Murphy (1983:143), unless the learners' performance data is analysed, it cannot be of use to improve instruction. Furthermore, without analysing learner performance one cannot determine whether curriculum objectives are met, or goals and standards are achieved (Murphy, 1983:141; Reddy *et al.*, 2015:28). Monitoring learner progress provides indicators of the systems that have been put in place to improve the school's academic performance; hence of the school's effectiveness. This is where the total quality of instruction is tried for 'fitness of purpose'.

3.7.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

Mbingi (2007:294) claims that '(w)e are all products of our culture'. But what is culture? Torrance (2010:xxix) describes culture as the 'innumerable ways of acting in which a group comes to know and recognise itself and which it seeks to protect and produce over time'. Synthesising these assertions, I resolved that, at a level of being, schools have personality, they can be identified according to some traits they portray, which then implies that, like humans, a school is shaped by its culture. Therefore, it can be argued that a school is the product of its set culture.

Creating a positive culture of learning and teaching is fundamental for school improvement. I view it as an effective way of communicating how resolute we are in our purpose as a school. Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:39) asserts that it is multi-layered and complex, but essential for learner achievement. On the other hand, Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong and Nguyen (2017:232) assert that creating a positive culture of learning and teaching promotes a 'productive collective effort'. One can interpret this as communicating a sense of safety and trust, while signalling expectations. Therefore, high school principals as instructional leaders must model values that influence the culture of unceasing improvement of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005:7). This can also be accomplished by asserting the underlying meanings of creating and sustaining a culture that supports instruction. Next, I discuss the underlying meaning of creating a positive culture of teaching and learning.

3.7.3.1 Protecting instructional time

Protecting instructional time implies the enhancement of teaching and learning opportunities. For Murphy (1983:141), 'increasing academic learning time in the classroom' significantly improves

learner performance, as optimising instructional time by protecting it increases instructional impact. Hence, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:39) regards time as a crucial resource of effective instruction. In the same light, Naicker *et al.* (2013:145) maintains that ‘instructional time is a direct correlate of learner achievement’. Thus, protecting instructional time is a significant step and position that high school principals as instructional leaders need to take, communicate and document.

Botha (2013:5466) asserts that effective principals promote optimum ‘utilization of teaching time’. In Naicker *et al.*’s (2013:145) research, principals were found to put a special effort into minimising externally prompted disruptions such as ‘labour unrest’. This suggests that, in protecting a valuable resource for teaching and learning, like time, high school principals need not only to do what they can, but have to go beyond the expected.

As instructional leaders, principals need to increase learners’ opportunities to learn through protecting instructional time from undue internal disruptions, such as excessive public announcements on the intercom system, several un-instructional activities (in the classroom), and ‘learners sent on errands’ (Hallinger & Murphy 1986:8; Moonsammy-Koopasammy, 2012:40; Iileka, 2017:54). Principals must ensure that school policies are in place to implement strategies of reducing belatedness, absenteeism and truancy in order to increase learning time for the learners (Murphy, 1983:141; Hallinger & Murphy (1986:7). This does not suggest that principals should impose policies, but rather they must work with the relevant stakeholders (of which the learner body is part) to facilitate the drafting of policies.

It is important that high school principals as instructional leaders should be exemplary in protecting instructional time. They can model this by managing their own time, particularly in activities that would involve staff. Punctuality must start with the principals. According to Botha (2013:5464), to manage time is to manage oneself, and people who manage their time are among the ‘highest achievers [in] life and learning’. This skill then can be transferred to managing the school’s instructional time, thereby protecting it. Failing by the principal to manage instructional time can brew chaos in a school, and managing the instructional programme may then seem impossible. This will give rise to a chaotic culture of teaching and learning, hence an ineffective school.

3.7.3.2 Maintaining high visibility

Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning calls for a ‘present’ high school principal. His/her presence must be felt by the learners, staff, parents, and the community in which

the school is located. The Center on Innovations in Learning (2016:1) describes visibility as the presence of the principal on the school premises and in classrooms; hence, keeping high visibility is referred to as managing by 'touring around'. This means that to maintain high visibility is not just a meaningless walk, but rather is a management strategy for principals as instructional leaders.

Geleta (2015:5) notes that the principal's visibility on the school premises and in classrooms promotes interaction between the principal, teachers and learners. A high school principal as an instructional leader is expected to build healthy relationships with everyone on whom the improvement of teaching and learning depends. As transpired among Kruger's (2003:2010) research participants, a teacher who commented on the principal's visibility said 'it strengthen(s) our hand and the children like it'. Maintaining high visibility suggests the accessibility of the principal (Balkrishen & Mestry, 2016:33). For Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:47), classroom walk-throughs are a principal's way of maintaining high visibility as an instructional leader and also helps to provide the principal with valuable information about instruction that would otherwise not be obtained.

High visibility can also be interpreted in terms of transparency, I suppose. High school principals as instructional leaders need to be transparent yet discreet. Klein (2011:552) asserts that transparency between the principal and the staff necessitates 'complete openness' regarding matters that include instructional strategies to enhance learning. Thus, Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:47) contends that effective school principals are inclined to implement an 'open door' policy, where parents, staff and learners are welcome to approach the principal around the school or in his/her office, while also using effective ways of communication, such as e-mails and telephone calls, to maintain high visibility.

High school principals as instructional leaders need to be visible in the community in which the school is located. This has an impact on promoting a positive relationship between the school and the community. Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:48) suggests that the principal can retain visibility in the community by attending its social activities, for it is important for principals to participate in the community socially. However, she also cautions that it is important for principals to judge the extent to which such involvement is possible. For me, principals need to be visible in the community to the extent that the event, first, is appropriate regarding the values of the school and it seeks to influence. Moreover, Weber (1989:198) asserts that, by being actively involved in community groups, the principal can better monitor the community's significant needs and identify issues that affect instruction.

3.7.3.3 Promoting professional development

Professional development is described ‘as attainment of skills and knowledge for both personal development and career advancement’ (Isabirye & Moloi, 2013:103). It incorporates all kinds of facilitated learning opportunities focused on practice that promote innovative teaching and learning. This suggests that professional development empowers teachers to make informed decisions on designing effective instructional approaches that would benefit learners. Isabirye and Moloi further assert that professional development is key to teacher quality and learner achievement. In agreement, Steele *et al.* (2015:128) assert that principals’ participation in and promotion of professional development holds a central place in the learning and academic performance of learners.

According to Mathibe (2007:523), poor academic performance in schools is blamed on principals’ lack of appropriate skills for leadership and management. He further notes that some people are therefore proposing professional development for principals. Mathibe’s assertion implies the instructional leadership of principals. This suggests that the school’s professional development system has a potential to render the school to be either functional or dysfunctional. Harris, McIntyre, Littleton, and Long (1979:208) describe the word ‘functionality’ as showing ‘relationships between people, their performances, and the expected outcomes’. The expected outcomes of PRasIL are schools’ academic results that show continuous improvement. However, this depends on the principal’s advocacy of professional development in the school, which will inform the school’s positive culture of learning.

Following on Mathibe’s assertion, principals need to undergo continuing professional development on instructional matters. According to Mestry (2017:2), continuing professional development can be described as a way of building one’s career or as a means of being well-informed. Continuing professional development will assist principals to have an up-to-date understanding of instructional approaches that he/she can use to support and develop teachers. Knowledge of current effective teaching approaches and the means of identifying learning will also provide them with expertise to identify gaps or deficiencies in teacher practice that need development. Commenting on the changes in expectations of principals’ roles, Mestry (2017:1) asserts that ‘... expectations have moved from the demand for management and control to the demand for educational leader who can foster professional development among staff’. The question is how do principals promote professional development to create a positive teaching and learning culture in a school?

Firstly, principals as instructional leaders should develop an orientation programme for new teachers. It is through this programme that new teachers can be introduced and equipped with ‘information and skills relating to teaching effectiveness and efficiency’ (DBE, n.d.:7). This may be, but new teachers are teachers, and they are supposed to have up-to-date instructional approaches. Harris *et al.* (1979:208) argue that teacher recruitment can influence classroom activities. They then recommend the socialisation of teachers into the profession. Harris and his colleagues describe socialisation as the process of preparing a person to assume certain roles in society. They further explain that the person’s ability to assume the roles concerned is established by his/her ability to ‘demonstrate the appropriate skills, behaviours, attitudes, and postures that the society associates with them’. Similarly, Peters and Biesta (2009:98) argue that socialisation is a function of education, in which individuals acquire norms and values and ‘particular ways of doing and being’ to become part of an existing cultural organisation and moral order. As put simply by Reddy *et al.* (2015:2), socialisation incorporates the processes of ‘... how we become inducted ...’. This implies that, although new teachers have teaching qualifications, they still need to be socialised into the teaching profession. Thus, they need to be developed professionally so that they demonstrate the appropriate instructional skills, behaviours and knowledge that are identified with the community of teachers. The DBE (n.d.:5-6) provides guidelines for orientation by citing what is expected of the principal in orientation; the expectations include to assign teachers to subjects and grades they are qualified to teach; provide them with the necessary resources; assign mentors; clearly articulate the school’s expectations of the teacher; and to set high expectations for teaching and learning and make them clear to all staff.

Secondly, in their efforts to reinforce the instructional competency of teachers, principals should invite experts from outside the school to conduct professional development programmes in the school (Hallinger *et al.*, 2017:232). Steele *et al.* (2015:129) note that it is not likely to find a high school principal who has a ‘multiple-subject background’, and this is where the subject matter becomes more complex. Therefore, principals may not be in possession of the content expertise to develop teachers in this regard. It is for this reason that principals should consider inviting experts. The other option that principals have is to send teachers for professional development sessions that are arranged by the district (Hallinger *et al.*, 2017:232).

Moreover, Hallinger *et al.* (2017:232) also found that principals of effective schools encouraged teachers to register for a full programme at university by giving them a partial subsidy. The findings of the research done by Hallinger *et al.* (2017) in Vietnam relate to the findings of the research conducted by Naicker *et al.* (2016) in SA. Naicker *et al.* found, *inter alia*, that schools in their study prized continuing professional development by working as a collective, reinforcing one another. The

point is that high school principals must exhaust all possible avenues of professional development to shape the workforce of teachers in a school to create and sustain a culture that supports teaching and learning. In this age of technology, professional development is inevitable for both principals as instructional leaders and for teachers. To enhance and advance teaching and learning, teachers are required to integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) into their teaching. According to Bialobrzeska and Cohen (2005:47), teachers do not have inherent skills either to use computers or to identify various ways to employ them in teaching and learning. For them, it is a lack of technical skill or educational insight into how computers as resources add value to teaching and learning. Thus, they suggest the creation of professional development, with the onus on principals as instructional leaders.

3.7.3.4 Providing incentives for teachers

Incentives are various ways of recognising and appreciating someone for their input or achievement so as to encourage consistency and improvement (Iileka, 2017:58). Thus Hallinger *et al.* (2017:232) assert that this practice can be used to inspire teachers. Incentives and rewards do not necessarily suggest signing cheques for teachers – no money might be involved.

However, instructionally effective schools cultivate a culture of perpetual improvement in which rewards are aligned with purposes and practices (Hallinger, 2005:6; Gawlik, 2018:4). For Blasé and Blasé (2000:134), praising teachers, which is a form of reward, significantly affects teachers' confidence, motivation and efficiency, while it fosters self-reflection and innovation among teachers. High school principals as instructional leaders should develop a rewarding attitude towards hard-working individual teachers or groups of teachers to enhance their self-esteem and for them to be motivated to improve standards. Iileka (2017:58) argues that giving teachers rewards for their noticeable instructional work contributes to the improvement of learners' academic performance.

3.7.3.5 Providing incentives for learning

Learners, like teachers, need recognition for their efforts and motivation to raise their standards (Iileka, 2017:62). This means that the school's system of rewards should be inclusive. As such, Hallinger and Murphy (1986:8-9) note that the reward system of principals as instructional leaders does not regard giving incentives for learning to individual teachers. Thus, to make an impact on motivating learning, high school principals as instructional leaders need to establish a school tradition

in which learners are acknowledged and given incentives and rewards in the presence of parents and community members.

To create and sustain a culture that supports teaching and learning, the provision of incentives for learning should be sustainable. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1986), instructionally effective schools establish a 'school-wide' focused system of incentives for learning. The system encompasses 'honor rolls, award assemblies, certificates of merit for attendance and behaviour, mention in the school newspaper and/or newsletter, pictures, ...', displays in the school foyer, and a personal word of encouragement and/or a pat on the shoulder (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986:9). In the absence of a positive teaching and learning culture in a school, one cannot expect improvements in the academic performance of that school. Any teaching and learning culture that is evident in a school did not happen on its own accord, the principal as an instructional leader gets a credit for it. I align my view with Zulu's (2004:12) assertion that creating a culture that supports teaching and learning is the onus of the principal.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter I conducted a literature review on instructional leadership and the roles that mark high school principals as instructional leaders. I then attempted to understand what a literature review is, including important aspects that I needed to consider so as to conduct a literature review efficiently and meaningfully.

I then proceeded to conceptualise the role of a high school principal in SA and traced the evolving landscape. This helped me to understand the context of high school principals in the country. I then looked at the minimum requirements for one to be eligible for principalship, which led to an inquiry of the readiness of principals when assuming the position. I found that principals assume their position without having acquired the necessary skills for management and leadership. For this reason, the literature asserts the need for an entrance qualification for school principals.

I then tried to briefly trace high school academic performance in SA, noting the grade 9 results for mathematics in the ANA and the grade 12 mathematics results. My interest in considering mathematics is motivated by its importance for SA scarce skills. I then focused on the matric NSC results from 2008 to 2017. In all these sectors I focused only on quantity. Against this background, I proceeded to understanding the concept of instructional leadership, the history of its origins, its

description, and a selection of three theories, namely those of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Weber (1989) and Botha (2004), which give a South African perspective.

Furthermore, I looked at the roles that are linked to high school PRasIL. This resulted in an analysis of PRasIL. I therefore considered PRasIL in relation to learners' academic performance. To do this I consulted both the literature that referenced the SA context and international literature. Lastly, I constructed 11 meanings that I narrowed down to three meanings for my study, namely stating the school's vision and mission, managing the instructional programme, and creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF POLICIES AND INTERVIEWS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on data collection from both policy analysis and interviews. I analyse the policy documents of the SASA (Act No. 84 of 1996); the ELAA (Republic of South Africa, 2007); and the Standard (2015). Using Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and guided by documentary analysis discussed in **chapter 2**, I interpret each of the three policy documents in relation to the meanings of this study constructed in **chapter 3**.

According to Gadamer's (1975:281-282) hermeneutics the interpreter of text brings his/her prejudices in the tradition of text interpretation. For Gadamer, prejudices are enablers of understanding. Moreover, hermeneutics interpretation is context conscious. It considers the historical context of the text, and the context of the text interpreter. In the same vein Saltmarsh (2015:31) asserts that policies develop from historical moments. For Saltmarsh, both these contexts need to be attended to. Additionally, Griffiths (2014:547) asserts that policy is philosophically informed by place and culture. Thus, when interpreting these policies, I need to consider their historical origins; and regarding the text as the other who has something to tell me; and keep projecting the meaning (Gadamer, 1975:279). On the other hand, my prejudices will assist me to ask questions of understanding.

Furthermore, the data collected from the interviews conducted with three high school principals will be analysed. The interviews' analysis in search of the meanings constructed for this study also employs a hermeneutic approach. This suggests that each data collected from the high school principals concerned and their schools will be analysed in consideration of their varying contexts. For Saltmarsh, policies do not only have a historical moment of origin, rather they are enacted in institutions which have their own structural realities.

In 2003 when the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Policy Handbook for Educators was released, I developed interest in reading educational policies other than curriculum policies. However, my main interest was more on understanding the articulations of the policies with regard to principals' duties rather than those of the teachers. Nonetheless, I cannot say the reading had any purpose of understanding as in making meaning. I also designed my own subject policies for mathematics and

physical sciences. For example, I had homework policies which outlined the minimum number of homework for each subject per week, guiding learners on how to complete their homework, and so on. However, it never crossed my mind to ask a question of what is education policy. This simply means that I was just reading a document called policy but if someone would have asked me what a policy is, I would not be in a position to answer thoughtfully. However, Ball (2006:44) argues that in the field of policy research, one of the conceptual problems is that ‘analysis fail to define conceptually what they mean by policy’. Thus, I will proceed in this chapter by first trying to get understanding of what educational policy is. Thus, I will first attempt to answer the question: what is education policy?

4.2 WHAT IS EDUCATION POLICY?

According to White (2012:507), ‘policies are proposed ways forward for organizations’. By this, White seems to mean that policies communicate the suggested ways in which organizations or institutions influence practice for an intended change. For example, post 1994, substantial faith was placed on the educational policies’ capability to structure the education system to the intended direction of a long desired social transformation (Christie, 2006; Samuel, 2017:3). Thus, in a narrow perspective as Gulson, Clarke and Petersen (2015:5) view it, policy is a cyclic ‘program of action’ consisting of the setting of agenda, implementation, and evaluation stage. For Samuel (2017:5), in all policies one may find some aspects that are meant to legally regulate the ‘actions’ of groups or individuals. I find Samuel’s arguments to imply that the new democratic government had to put new education policies which asserted the ‘proposed ways forward’ after unseating the apartheid regime.

On the other hand, de Clercq (1997:129) describes policy as a process comprising of four different stages namely ‘initiation, formulation, implementation, and evaluation’. For her, policy formulation is claimed to be the ‘responsibility of the politicians and their representative institutions’. Whereas the implementation of policy is said to be a rational, technical, and administrative activity of a bureaucratic, politically neutral orders whose responsibility is to achieve the objectives of the policy set by politicians. White (2012:506) concurs with de Clercq, and notes that teachers have become implementers of decisions taken outside schools. This suggests that education policies and their objectives are set by politicians to be enacted by professionals say, principals. In this light, Ball, Maguire, Braun, and Hoskins (2011:611-612) argue that policy can produce both policy subjects and actors in teachers. For Ball *et al.* (2011:611), although teachers in their school contexts can think about and try to understand policy that informs their action, their thinking is constrained in the policy itself. Therefore, ‘they are not autonomous’, they are constructed by policy; and as they become

competent in doing policy the more they become compliant (Ball *et al.*, 2011:611; Ball, 2015:4). For me, this suggests that education policies influence the ontological stance of its actors.

About policy formulation by politicians, Griffiths (2014:549, 554) when exploring how philosophy of education can have a voice in education policy, describes working with policy-makers for philosophers of education as characterized by ‘competing demands of critique and contrast’. In Wain’s words, Griffiths argues that ‘when you are on the inside you cannot go public with your critique. It is always within the four walls. Once decisions are taken and they’re taken by the minister, and even when you disagree a lot, you have to shut up’. For me, this suggests the tension that exists between philosophers of education working with politicians on the initial stages of policy. Thus, for Ball (2006:44-45), policy is as a result of compromises at different levels with its initial influence being in the micro-politics of ‘legislative formulation, in the parliamentary process and in the politics and micropolitics of interest group articulations’. As such, Ball (1990:3) further notes that among other circles that policies ‘shift and change’ their meanings are in the fields of politics. For me, any educational policy may have political ideas or interests underlying educational meanings.

On a different perspective, Ball (2006:44) view policies as both text and discourse. For Ball, these two concepts represent a contrast between ‘structure and agency’. According to Ball (2006:44), policy as text is set in complex ways. For him, it is therefore subject to complex interpretation and reinterpretation ways by its actors in which meanings are constructed in relation to the actors’ history, skills, experiences, resources, and context. As Gadamer points out that text interpreters bring their prejudices which then mediate and shape the process of interpretation and understanding. That is, for policy actors/subjects to understand the messaged conveyed in the policy as text they need to interpret the text. Which then suggests that meanings constructed from one policy interpreted by different actors will give rise to different meanings. Ball (2006:44) further asserts that policies are ‘both contested and changing, always in the state of becoming’. Ball notes that, at the stage of policy formulation, only selective influences and agendas are taken as legitimate, and only certain voices are heard. Meaning that it is impossible for an education policy to have consistent and conclusive meanings through all its distinct contexts. The policy meanings may not be relevant for the people on the ground or may not address the social needs or speak common language for the desired change with the so-called ‘agents of change’, teachers (Puti, 2006:100) and principals. At times, for Ball (2006:45), the contestations may result into a collective undermining of policy. Which I tend to think that this is what Puti (2006:100) cautions of in the words of the African National Congress (ANC). He argues that ‘almost any education and training policy will come to grieve in practice if it does not win the support of two essential constituencies: those who are expected to benefit from it and those

who are expected to implement it'. This was the case recently with the ANAs which teachers' unions particularly the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) challenged and undermined (Nicolson, 2015).

Besides that, policies as texts are contested based on communication intent among other things, Ball (2006:44) argues that text is not necessarily clear, closed or complete. As such, they are sometimes enacted based on confusion (Ball, 2006:45). He further asserts that throughout the stages of policy process there are different interpretations which yield confusion allowing the 'play in and the playing-off of meanings', thereby opening gaps and spaces for response and action. For Gulson *et al.* (2015:21), these gaps, spaces and differences are because of the gap between the context of policy text formulation and its enactment context. This suggests that some policy text may have meaning in its context of production but does not make any sense in the context of practice. Ball (2006:50) cautions that we need to recognise and analyse the existence of overriding discourses, 'regimes of truth, erudite knowledge' such as neo-liberalism, within social policy. Liasidou and Symeou (2018:149) confirm the critical role played by 'supranatural organizations' which include the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in both formulation and implementation of education policies throughout various socio-political contexts. However, Ball (2006:45) puts the onus of education policy mediation to the school principal, who must interpret the policy for and with teachers (and other stakeholders at school level) in relation to the context. To which Ball (2006:47) posits that the tendency is usually to assume that teachers and context need to adjust to the policy and not policy adjusting to the context. For Ball, this privileges the policy makers' 'reality'. For me, it means that principals need to be aware of imposing secondary adjustments when interpreting policies.

What is discourse? Discourse embodies meaning and social relationships and constitutes 'subjectivity and power relations' (Ball, 1990:17; Ball, 2006:48). That is, discourse is all about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority, but it is also about what can be said, and thought. As such, Ball (2006:44) maintains that in his discussion, policy discourse means a 'regulated practice that accounts for statements'. Thus, policy discourse constructs its social actors (Ball, 2006:48). Its actors take positions that have been established within the policy. That is, policy as discourse informs its actors of their expected actions and tells them who they are; that is, it designates its actors. For him, discourse speaks us rather than that we speak discourse. Thus, Gulson *et al.* (2015:31) considers education policy to be culture producing. So, we speak only as policy allows us, we act only as it is intended in the policy, and we can be only as policy establishes us. For Ball (2006:48), 'we are spoken by policies'. In arguably sense, teachers and principals do not do policy, it is the policy that

does them (Ball, 2011:616; Ball, 2015:2). I now understand Ball's (2006:43-44) argument that there is no polarity between structure and agency but rather, they are implicit in each other.

Lastly, Ball (2006:50) argues that policy has effects. Ball classifies policy effects under two categories that are usually fused together, namely the general and specific effects. For Ball, effects are moved by responses to policy and they differ from context to context. According to him, general effects are of considerable significance about social justice and equity, that is, policy changes what we do (Ball, 2006:50; Ball, 2015:1). For Ball (2006:50), general effects become apparent in cases where specific elements of change are related to specific responses. Furthermore, Ball (2006:51) identify policy effects as those of the first and second order. He describes first order effects as manifested in particular sites or systems as changes in structure or practice, whereas second order effects 'are changes on patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice'. Following Ball, this suggests that effects are distributed across systems and societies according to their orders.

This discussion made understand that policies make a deliberate communication of institutions' intentions of changing operations for their intended future. Secondly, policies can be described as both text and discourse, and have effects. This description of policy was quite insightful to me both as a teacher and as a new researcher who is interpreting education policies in this study. In the next section I briefly outline South African education policy, focusing on its development post 1994.

4.3 SKETCHING SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION POLICY (RELEVANT TO MY STUDY) DEVELOPMENT

Since 1990, the year in which the ANC was unbanned and the late President Nelson Mandela release from prison, policy discourses with the restructuring vision prevailed (de Clercq, 1997:127; Christie, 2006:373). According to Christie, it was in these discourses for education policies that possibilities and constraints of educational transformation in SA were articulated. For de Clercq, since 1994, the democratic government has continued with policy discourses aimed at restructuring the South African education system. Expanding on this, Christie notes that the policy investigations explored 'what an education system based on the values of the broad democratic movement might look like'. Among these policy investigations I can make mention of the first White Paper on Education and Training which was published in 15 March 1995 under the first Minister of Education of a democratic system of education, Professor Bhengu (Republic of South Africa, 1995).

According to Christie (2006:376), it was necessary that the new education system eradicates the categorical distribution of population which was central to the apartheid regime; so, policy discourses of redress and equity had to be incorporated into regulatory framework of the liberation movement. Christie (2006:378) further notes that among several areas, education policy needed ‘immediate attention to break with the racial distortions’ and apartheid assumptions. As such, Ota’s (1997:483) critiques confirmed this notion that educational policy is experienced as a continuous interactive process in the South African context rather than following discrete steps in all levels of its production (policy discourse, policy text production, and policy implementation). For me, this suggests that the democratic government felt a prompt need to articulate the notions of equity and redress in the education system. It appears that it was addressed as a matter of urgency. In de Clercq’s (1997:127) perspective this was an act of putting out fires at the same time directly responding to crisis management. In such manner, for her, the South African education policies were unfit to accomplish their intended purpose of equity, redress, participation, and development. These arguments based on the early developments of education policies, highlight their main common purpose as captured in policy discourses; and I note insightful critiques.

In 1996 the basic legislation education policy text focusing on schooling system was published, the SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996. The purpose of the SASA is ‘(t)o provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; ...’ (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The SASA has been amended several times by the ELAA, the earliest amendment being that of 1997 (No. 100 of 1997). The latest amendment before the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act of 2011, being ELAA of 2007 (ELAA, Act No. 31 of 2007). The policy discourses, and investigations including policy texts such as White Paper on Education and Training 1 among others, resulted to the formulation SASA with provisions which directed SA towards democratisation and decentralisation of school-based system of management and governance, placing significant decision-making authority in schools (Mestry & Singh, 2007:477).

However, poor performance prevailed in schools which invited scholars and researchers to conduct studies, to inquire of the problem. Mestry and Singh (2007:478) cites ‘a breakdown of professionalism by principals’. On the other hand, Marishane (2016:26) notes that, SA, like other countries, is in the period of ‘standards-based accountability’ set on the principle that, learning and school improvement is centred on school principals; and a research supported claim that ‘high academic standards demand high professional standards’ for principals. For him, it is against this background that the DBE has introduced the ‘the Standard’. The draft which was referred to as ‘The

South African Standards for Principals' was published for public comments in August 2014 (DBE, 2014b). This draft resulted in a policy text 'the Standard' which was published in 2015. In the next section I analyse the three policies.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF POLICIES

Bardach (2012:xviii) notes that analysing a policy is a complex activity. While de Clercq (1997:128) acknowledges the complexity of policy itself and that they must be analysed in different ways considering that above all, policies are about contexts among other things. On the other hand, Samuel (2017:8) argues that the way one analyses policy is 'directly linked' to how he/she conceptualises policy (as text or discourse).

Thus, taking note of the above assertions, in the next section I focus on a hermeneutical analysis of the aforementioned policies. Gadamer (1975:184) notes that hermeneutics encompasses the business of historical research. According to Gadamer, this text interpretation that considers 'the totality of the historical reality' to which the documents belonged or emerged, that is, its historical context. For Gadamer, 'every sentence can be understood' in relation to its context. In this section I analysed the SASA, ELAA, and the Standard. My analysis briefly looks at each's brief history. I then focus on the meanings and their sub-meanings that I have constructed for my study.

4.4.1 The SASA

The SASA is one of the earliest education legislation documents that was published by the democratic government. Among these are National Education Policy Act of 1996, and the South African Qualification Act of 1996 (Christie, 2008:131-132, Radebe, 2015:2). According to Radebe the establishment and the promulgation of these policies were inspired by both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) and the Bill of Rights. The SASA set frameworks, norms and standards for school governance; stipulating for all schools a democratically elected Governing Bodies of which the parent component forms the majority (Christie, 2008:131). Confirming this notion Naidoo *et al.* (2015:323) argues that at the heart of democratic schools is shared decision making in relation to governance and leadership of schools as set in the SASA.

In the preamble the SASA notes that SA needs 'a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision' and provide an education of progressively high quality for

all learners. It points out that these activities will lay a strong foundation for the development of all people's talents and capabilities; and so, advancing the democratic transformation of society, combating racism and all other forms of discrimination and intolerance. Considering this introductory note of the SASA, it seems that the SASA is all about undoing the principles of the apartheid government in the South African education, particularly in the schooling system.

According to Samuel (2017:7), SASA is a redistributive policy. For him, a redistributive policy carries a strong social agenda which outlines the intended new directions of a state, organization and institution. It further sets frameworks of how resources will be allocated to alter a status quo and providing reasons that necessitate such allocation, while establishing new rights and responsibilities (Samuel, 2017:7). As such, chapter 4, section 34 & 35 of SASA outlines the responsibility of State, and Norms and Standards for School Funding respectively; while section 36 points to the responsibilities of SGB.

To sum, the SASA seems to be responding to the injustices of the apartheid government in the schooling system. Its intentions are to transform the South African education system and bring about social transformation. This transformation is effected by establishing *inter alia*, a uniform education system for the organisation, governance, and school funding. Next, I focus my attention on analysing the SASA based on the meanings that I have constructed for this study.

4.4.1.1 Stating the school's vision and mission

The SASA does not make any mention of this meaning of stating the school's vision and mission. In section 16(3) of chapter 3, it only points out that 'the professional management of the school must be undertaken by the principal under the authority' of the HD. The SASA does not give any direction or say how principals are expected to fulfil this mandate.

My question now is: How does a principal undertake a professional management of a school? Put differently: What is entailed in the principal's professional management of a school? In my attempt to answer these questions I encountered McCullough, Lipscomb, Chiang, and Gill (2016:4) who give a framework which indicates that principals' professional practices consists of four domains with distinct components. Two of the four domains are leadership of learning (instructional leadership) and professional and community leadership. Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:19-20) concurs with McCullough *et al.*, she provides six typologies of the core responsibilities and duties of a principal. One of her six typologies is the 'professional management' of a school which

involves providing instructional leadership, according to her. For me, it simply means that the principals' professional management of a school encompasses the provision of instructional leadership, among other things. Based on these assertions, the SASA embraces principals' roles as instructional leaders.

However, the SASA makes no other reference to any of my meanings of the principals' roles as instructional leaders. Thus, I find it difficult to interpret the SASA for my meanings and their sub-meaning. In the next section cast my gaze to the ELAA of 2007.

4.4.2 The ELAA of 2007

The ELAA (Act No. 31 of 2007) was published in December 2007 in government gazette number 30637. The ELAA amended several Acts which include the National Education Policy Act of 1996; the SASA of 1996; and the South African Council of Educators Act of 2000. One of the amendments effected in the SASA is the insertion of section 16A which concerns the functions and responsibilities of a public school (Republic of South Africa, 2007).

The purpose of the ELAA (Act No. 31 of 2007) regarding SASA includes the provision for the functions and responsibilities of a principal, and to regulate the identification of underperforming schools (Republic of South Africa, 2007). This amendment was done in a year's time of the enactment of the then new curriculum policy, the National Curriculum Statement, in the FET phase, after ten years since the SASA came to effect in 1996. For Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:22), the ELAA of 2007 increases the scope of the roles of principals and is more specific in stating these roles. I agree with her, I also find the 2007 ELAA to be clearer and more structured especially its section on the responsibilities and functions of principals.

4.4.2.1 Stating the school's vision and mission

The ELAA does not make any reference to this meaning. However, it seems to imply its sub-meanings, namely the framing of the school goals and communicating the school goals.

Framing the school goals: Although the ELAA is silent about principals stating vision and mission for their schools, in section 16A (c) it points out that at the beginning of the year the principal of a public school must prepare a plan outlining how the academic performance of the school will be improved. This plan must be and submitted to the HD and be presented to the SGB. The ELAA

makes this setting of the school's academic improvement plan to be the principal's annual activity. For me, this suggests that each year high school principals are required by law to frame their schools' academic goals which articulates how they intend to improve the learner academic performance in their schools.

Communicating the school's goals: It is implicit in the setting of the academic performance improvement plan of the school that principals need to communicate the academic goals of the improvement plan to teachers to ensure it is achieved. The principal must present the schools' academic improvement plan to the HD, and table it at the school's governing body meeting. This implies that high school principals are required to communicate the academic goals for each year to the HD and to their schools' governing bodies. The HD, according to ELAA, may approve the academic improvement plan or return it to the principal with recommendations. If the HD approves the academic performance improvement plan, the principal must report the progress upon implementation of the plan to the HD and the SGB by 30 June. This further suggests a continuing communication of the academic goals by the principal since the drawing up of the plan implied communication will be done with the teachers in their departments monitoring the subjects learning objectives which impact on the academic performance.

Furthermore, the principal must 'prepare and submit' to the HD an annual report about the school's academic performance in respect to the minimum outcomes, standards and procedures for assessment as determined by the education minister. The ELAA seems to be quite explicit about the principal's communication of his/her school's academic performance and the academic performance plan to the HD and the SGB rather than to teachers and learners. For me, it seems like the ELAA stresses accountability rather than communication.

4.4.2.2 Managing instructional program

The ELAA is again not explicit about the management of an instructional program by the principal. Instead, in section 16A (2a), it cites that 'the implementation of all the educational programmes and curriculum activities' is the onus of a principal 'in undertaking the professional management of a public school'. In trying to understand the ELAA in this notion I asked two questions from this statement: first, what are educational programmes? Second, what is meant by curriculum activities?

Starting with the latter, one of the various descriptions of the word curriculum is that it is a 'sequentially ordered map of knowledge' which generally outlines a 'fit-all knowledge' (Reddy,

2014:12). For Reddy, this description which identifies curriculum as a framework seemed to suggest the advent of ‘ordered, controlled teaching and learning ...’. Furthermore, curriculum can also be referred to as an educative setting in which learners should live (Reddy, 2014:13). On the other hand, Joseph, Green, Mikel, and Windschtl (2011:36) argue that in schools, curriculum exists with regard to planning for specific programs and effective procedures to achieve educational outcomes which include ‘a narrowly specialised set of skills’. Which means, for me, that curriculum activities lead to the qualification of learners. As a concept, curriculum meaning has its etymology in the Latin word ‘carrere’ which means a track or course (Reddy, 2014:13). He further describes curriculum as metaphorically presented a track where athletes competed. According to Reddy, this description of curriculum seems to be a befitting one in educational discourses for teachers have plans through which learners proceed to achieve certain learning objectives and outcomes.

Following these descriptions, it seems to me that curriculum is a means of conveying intended educational programs with a goal of achieving educational outcomes of which qualification is one of those. It further implies that, if learner qualification is one of the educational outcomes, teaching and learning is one set of curriculum activities. Thus, the ELAA implies that high school principals should manage their schools instructional program.

Supervising and evaluating instruction: The ELAA does not make any direct reference to supervising and evaluating of instruction. However, following from the implied management of instructional program as discussed above, since curriculum is viewed as giving rise to ‘ordered, controlled teaching and learning’. On the other hand, the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Education Department (n.d.:5) contends that curriculum management encompasses six elements which include ‘supervising the taught curriculum at classroom level’, and monitoring and evaluating curriculum execution. Therefore, it seems that to understand that high school principals should supervise and evaluate instruction they need interpretation of interpretation of the ELAA. They need to be philosophical.

Coordinating the curriculum: The ELAA states that principals must prepare and submit a report with regard to the ‘effective use of available resources’. It further asserts that principals must manage the use of learning support material and other equipment. I align this assertion by the ELAA with what Murphy (1983:141) indicates that, one way in which principals can facilitate curriculum coordination is to confirm that there is relevancy and consistency in both basic and supplementary resources that the school uses. Thus, the ELAA seems to articulate the high school principals’ role

of curriculum coordination and their accountability for effective use of resources thereof. Thus, I perceive ELAA is a bit clearer in this one notion of managing instructional program.

Monitoring learner progress: The ELAA is not quite explicit about principals monitoring the progress of learners. However, it points out that principals must draw an academic performance improvement plan at the beginning of the year and submit it to the HD and present it to the SGB. Further to this, by 30 June of that year, principals need to report to HD and the SGB on the progress made in implementing the performance improvement plan. For me, it simply means that ELAA indirectly advises high school principals to evaluate learner progress. The ELAA does not only implicitly instructs principals to monitor learner progress rather principals are also held accountable of learner progress, academically. I draw this perception from the fact that principals need to report to both the HD and SGB about learners' academic progress in relation to the set academic performance plan of the school for each year.

4.4.2.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

The ELAA does not feature this meaning in its assertions.

Protecting instructional time: The ELAA require principals to submit a report regarding the 'effective use of available resources'. However, it makes no reference to protecting instructional time as a said resource.

Maintaining high visibility: The ELAA makes no reference of principals maintaining high visibility in schools.

Promoting professional development: The ELAA does not make any mention of principals' role in promoting professional development of teachers. But rather, principals are instructed in the ELAA to manage 'all educators and support staff'.

Providing incentives for teachers: Again, ELAA makes no reference in providing incentives for teachers. Instead, it requires principals to assist the HD in handling the disciplinary issues with regard to teachers and support staff employed by the HD.

Providing incentives for learning: There is no mention, either implicit or indirect, of the principal providing incentives for learning. But rather, the ELAA states that the principal must assist the SGB in issues pertaining to learner discipline in school.

It appears as if the ELAA is not quite explicit about PRasIL with regard to the meanings of my study. A deeper digging with a further reference to literature was necessary to make sense of the

roles of high school principals as instructional leaders. However, patterns of principals' roles as instructional leaders are implicitly established in the ELAA. For example, communicating school's academic improvement plan implies that principals must frame academic goals annually and work towards achievement of the set goal. That is the accomplishment of the academic plan, for ELAA. Though the communication lines are drawn explicitly between the principals and the HD, and between the principal and the SGB, it suggests that principals will first communicate the set academic performance improvement plan with teachers, since principal can only accomplish the plan through teachers. The setting and the communication of the school's academic performance plan implies that the ELAA points to the leadership role of high school principals as instructional leaders.

Furthermore, the ELAA instructs principals of public schools to manage education programs and curriculum activities. It has appeared within this section that managing education programs and curriculum activities include monitoring and supervising instructional program. It therefore seems that the ELAA implies that high school principals as instructional leaders need to play the role of a manager and that of leader at the same time. Notably, the ELAA seems to be mindful of the improvement of learner academic performance in schools. In the next section I analyse the Standard and pay more attention in understanding its articulations of PRasIL with respect to the meanings of my study.

4.4.3 The Standard

The DBE's (2015:3, 5) foreword and introduction in 'the Standard' reiterates that this policy provides what the South African education system expects of principals and those who aspire to be entrusted with school leadership and management. For the DBE, this is the first policy on a 'common and universally accepted understanding' of the principal's expectations. The DBE (2015:3) notes that its efforts are concentrated 'on the need to ensure positive/successful curriculum management outcomes' in schools among other issues of school leadership and management. Following this argument, it seems that the Standard emphasises the agenda the agenda of principals' instructional leadership.

The DBE (2015:5) describes the Standard as the policy which 'fully defines the role of principals and the key aspects of professionalism, image and competences required'. It further posits that it gives 'clear role description for school leaders and what is required of the principal'. Precisely, the Standard addresses all school principals in all South African schools; and it also acknowledges the

diversity of the South African school contexts. Thus, the Standard appears to be a policy which articulates what the expectations are of principals as leaders and managers in schools from all varying school contexts. Moreover, its purpose is delineated into eight ‘interdependent key areas’ which constitutes the ‘core purpose of the principal in any school’ in SA (DBE, 2015:3, 10). These key areas of principalship are:

- Leading teaching and learning in the school
- Shaping the direction and development of the school
- Managing quality of teaching and learning and securing accountability
- Developing and empowering self and others
- Managing the school as an organization
- Working with and for the community
- Managing human resources (staff) in the school
- Managing and advocating extramural activities.

The Standard (DBE, 2015:10-12) further describes the key area of **leading teaching and learning in the school** in five kinds of leadership, namely *strategic leadership*; *executive leadership*; *instructional leadership*; *cultural leadership*; and *organizational leadership*. Accountability was implied in the ELAA whereas the Standard explicitly points out that the principals is accountable to the HD, the employer; and ‘through’ the SGB; and to the school community. Moreover, the Standard states it prominently that principals are ‘responsible for leading and managing and evaluating the curriculum’ as to ensure the quality of teaching in schools.

This eight-dimensional purpose of the Standard points to the multi-dimensionality of principals’ work in schools. Ball (2006:96) cautions that schools, school managements, and school cultures are ‘not of a piece’. Rather, for Ball, schools are ‘complex, contradictory, sometimes incoherent organisations’. He further notes that schools are assembled overtime to form a bricolage of memories and bight ideas of policy effects among other things. This briefly reflects on schools the place where principals need to and are expected to succeed in understanding, articulating, and enacting their roles as identified in the Standard. Next, I focus on the meanings of my study as articulated in the Standard.

4.4.3.1 Stating the school’s vision and mission

As strategic leaders of teaching and learning in schools, the Standard expects principals to collaborate with SGBs and other stakeholders to ‘create and develop a vision that will capture the

imagination of the community’ (DBE, 2015:10). Thus, under the key area of **leading teaching and learning**, a principal must state the school’s vision and mission which embraces the interests and needs of the community. The Standard seems to suggest to principals that leading teaching and learning strategically, principals need to work with the community in order to understand the communities imagined purpose of the school. That the community’s imagined purpose of the school needs to reflect on the vision and mission of the school, for me, it signals that the school’s basic purpose is to serve the community and it shows that the principal commitment in working for the community is endorsed.

Under the key area of **shaping the direction and development of the school**, the Standard states that working with the SGB, the School Management Team (SMT), and with parents in the school’s community, the principal creates a ‘shared vision and mission and strategic plan to inspire and motivate all who work in and with the school and to provide direction for the school’s on-going development’ (DBE, 2015:15). According to the Standard, this vision and mission captures the ‘core values and moral purpose of the school’ while considering the ‘national education values and the traditions of the school’s community and the values’ cherished in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Thus, the Standard makes a prominent statement that principals working with the SGBs and SMTs need to create a shared school’s vision and mission. The Standard further notes that this is a way of shaping the direction and development of a school. It also points out that principals must consider the range of contexts that influence the stating of the shared vision and mission of their schools, namely the values and the moral purpose of the school; the national education values; and traditions of the school’s community. The Standard seems to draw principals’ attention to important aspects that need to be considered if they are to create a pertinent schools’ vision and mission. For me, this suggests that the Standard is cautioning principals that the position of principalship is not for self-serving interests, rather, a designation of service.

Framing the school goals: The principal should ‘work with everyone in the school’s community to ensure that the vision and mission of the school is translated into agreed goals and operational plans, designed to promote and sustain on-going improvement’ (DBE, 2015:15). This statement is one of the proposals the Standard cites as principals’ actions in relation to shaping the direction and development of the school. The Standard clearly demonstrates for principals that school goals translate from the school’s vision and mission. That is, there is an inherent progression from shared vision and mission to agreed goals. These goals are framed with the intention to promote and sustain a continuous school improvement. For me, this simply means that for a principal who is an instructional leader would shape the school’s direction towards a continued learner academic

performance through the efforts of improving the quality of instruction in a school. Therefore, school goals will reflect the intended ends as captured in the school's vision.

The Standard (DBE, 2015:17) makes a reference of framing the school goals in the suggested principal's actions in relation to **managing the school as an organisation**. With regard to this action, principals should 'ensure that the school's management, policies and practices are sensitive to local circumstances and are in line with national and provincial policies and reflect the goals and needs of the school'. In this perspective, the agreed upon goals influences the processes of managing the school and the school practices.

Thus, the Standard notes that principals need to frame school goals at the level of shaping and developing the school's direction. The school's direction is not left open for the principal to decide on it; the Standard points out that the school goals are differentiated from the school's vision and mission. Whereas the school's vision and mission must reflect the community's imagination of the school and capture the national education values and the traditions of the school's community and the values. The Standard (DBE, 2015:5) states that principals working with SMTs, SGBs, Representative Council of Learners (RCLs) and the 'wider communities must effectively manage, support and promote the best quality teaching and learning, the purpose of which is to enable learners to attain the highest levels of achievement ...'. This enunciation, for me, suggests that the Standard advocates for principals' instructional leadership.

Communicating the school's goals: According to the Standard, instructional leadership is one of the five kinds of leadership for teaching and learning. Therefore, as instructional leaders, principals are required to promote 'a culture of achievement for all learners by communicating vision and mission that is shared by all stakeholders' (DBE, 2015:11). Although the Standard does not directly articulate the communication of the school goals by the principal as an instructional leader, it is implied by expecting principals to communicate the shared vision and mission of the school. I take cognisance that this communication of vision and mission is that it is directed at promoting the culture of 'achievement'. By association, for me, learner 'achievement' when it is related to leadership of teaching and learning as in instructional leadership, it implies the goal of instructional leadership. Thus, in this sense, communicating the school goals is somewhat implied in the standard.

The Standard (DBE, 2015:15) refers to the required knowledge for shaping the direction and development of the school. In this area it notes that principals need to have knowledge of

‘approaches to building, communicating and implementing a shared vision’. Moreover, principals need to have ‘strategies for inspiring, challenging, motivating and empowering people to commit to the school’s values, vision and mission and to carry them forward in planned action’. As I have indicated somewhere in **chapter 3** that leading involves communication not for compliance, but for conviction between the one leading and the led. Drawing from Heystek, I have mentioned that leadership among other things, is about followership and motivation. That the Standard mentions communication of the shared vision, inspiration, and motivation of stakeholders to commit to the values, vision and mission of the school suggests communication of school goals. Shaping the school’s direction and development by communicating the school’s vision and mission implies that these are translated to goals that need to be accomplished, I suppose. Again, the communication of school goals is logically asserted in the Standard.

As an organizational leader, the principal is expected to ‘design a system of communication for sharing good practices’ (DBE, 2015:12). The Standard expects principals to be organizational leaders when leading teaching and learning. Therefore, designing a system of communication with the intent of sharing good practices suggests that principals communicate and promote communication for improved instruction practices in the school. Thus, I also regard this undertaking as the other approach of communicating the school goals.

The Standard highlights that the values embedded in leadership and management of a school are the principal’s ‘commitment to the core values and vision’ of the school (DBE, 2015:6). For me, commitment implies communication in a deeper level of influence. So, the principal’s commitment to the school’s vision can be understood as influencing others to follow his/her example. For me, influencing with one’s ‘being’ is a more effective way of communication. It sets the tone of the school which becomes a threshold for establishing the culture of the school. Hence, the Standard (DBE, 2015:22) regards a principal as a ‘proficient communicator’.

4.4.3.2 Managing instructional programme

Principals are required to develop and implement a ‘data-driven, research based’ instructional framework, which is in line with the national curriculum (DBE, 2015:11). In the knowledge related to leading teaching and learning in schools, the Standard notes that principals need to have knowledge of collecting and analysing relevant data (DBE, 2015:13). It further states that principals must have knowledge of ‘evidence derived from research and practice to inform the improvement of learning and teaching and the enhancement of learning culture’. The Standard seems to be clear in its

expectations regarding principals' responsibility of managing instructional program in their schools. Notably, principals are required to use relevant data and research to design and make instructional improvements.

Furthermore, the Standard cites actions that relate to leading teaching and learning inclusive of but not limited to the following:

- Principals should ensure that sound data, at class and school level is collected and used to inform the continuous monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning;
- Principals should keep up to date with current research, debates and trends, through reading professional books, journals and publications.

I understand the Standard as saying that, principals need to keep informed of the current educational research and debates, and any discourse that has influence or effect in education. This will assist principals to situate their schools' instructional practices and improvements within the contemporary developments as it fits their contexts. However, the Standard seems not to make prominent enunciation about how principals should employ data in deciding on instructional framework and its improvement thereof. Driven by my quest for wisdom and answering to the call of the Standard namely to be engaged in relevant debates, I turned to research literature.

Marishane (2015:193) broadly describes data as any piece of information that assists educators to gain better understanding of their learners. For him, this data can be qualitative, quantitative, or both but importantly, it must relate to the core business of schooling. Data can also be categorized as formative and summative (Wayman *et al.*, 2006:9; Marishane, 2015:193). Marishane further provides examples of data that relates to the core business of schooling as learner achievement data (includes continuous assessments, class work and homework projects) and demographic data (includes grade-to-grade learner mobility, attendance, gender, socio-economic backgrounds and enrolment in programs addressing special needs) among others. According to Wayman *et al.* (2006:8-9), the conversation of data examination revolves around the questions: what did learners learn recently and 'how do I know it'? 'In what practices have I engaged that effect student (learners) learning'. These questions guide the learners' data analysis.

Moreover, the Standard notes that as instructional leaders, principals are required to identify 'good instructional practices that motivate and increase learner achievement', then encourage teachers to employ such practices (DBE, 2015:11). This action is linked to the use of data in order to make informed decisions; for principals as instructional leaders, to identify good instructional practice they

need to inquiry from the sound learners' data. Thus, data use is viewed as stimulating a search for new ideas (Wayman *et al.*, 2006:3). For them, Principals who make data informed decisions can identify and use valuable information to shape school improvement. While for Marishane (2015:194), 'school improvement occurs when an instructional leader effectively uses data to make decisions that support the instructional programme. The point is that the Standard seems resolute about managing instructional programme.

Supervising and evaluating instruction: The Standard (DBE, 2015:14) posits that as an action required for leading teaching and learning, principals should facilitate a continuous 'monitoring and evaluation of educators in relation to all classroom practice'. For me, this suggests that the Standard expects principals to conduct supervision in the classrooms and evaluate instruction practices.

Further to this, the Standard (DBE, 2015:17) requires principals to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in schools as it notes that it is their responsibility to do so. It further makes it the onus of the principal to 'establish and maintain quality assurance systems and procedures' while he/she endorses a collective responsibility. The Standard seems to be firm in the position that principals have the entire responsibility of leading teaching and learning though they have to enforce a collective responsibility. The role of leading teaching and learning in the sense of supervising and evaluating instruction calls for a fair balance of leadership and management skills from a principal.

Thus, for me, principals need to possess what Naicker and Mestry (2016:4) refer to as the 'system leadership' for their schools, which requires the transfer of skills, knowledge, innovation, and best practice of instruction. The point is when one considers the principals' responsibility it is hard to believe that it can be trusted to individuals who mostly rely on the experience in 'actual teaching'.

Coordinating curriculum: In actions of leading teaching and learning, the Standard states that principals should ensure that teachers fully understand the prescribed National Curriculum and have skills relating to teaching, monitoring, and evaluation (DBE, 2015:14). Moreover, the Standard (DBE, 2015:16) notes that principals, 'as managers' need to create systems and processes to address curriculum implementation. Additionally, the Standard requires principals to monitor, evaluate, and review the quality and use of the school's available resources to confirm a continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning (DBE, 2015:17). Therefore, high school principals have a responsibility to coordinate curriculum.

Monitoring learner progress: The Standard (DBE, 2015:14) requires principals to use ‘sound data’ to continuously monitor and evaluate learner progress and achievement. This is mentioned as a required principals’ action to lead teaching and learning in public schools. To manage a school as an organisation which is a dimension of leading teaching and learning, according to the Standard, principals must monitor and evaluate the use of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment of learners to provide timely and accurate feedback to all stakeholders (DBE, 2015:16). As actions relating to managing human resources, principals should provide parents with quarterly feedback on learner progress (DBE, 2015:19). They must ‘facilitate parent-teacher meetings progressively to discuss and measure learner progress and needs regarding learner performance’. These assertions illustrate the importance of the principals’ monitoring of learner progress for accountability to parents and learners, and for evaluating school improvement.

In the knowledge relating to leading teaching and learning in schools, the Standard notes that principals need to have knowledge of collecting and analysing relevant data for monitoring and evaluating learner performance in relation to National Curriculum (DBE, 2015:11). This suggests that principals must align the schools’ performance standards, processes, and procedures with the expectations as cited in the national curriculum. For me, the suitable indicator of this alignment, when the principal has assured the instructional quality, will be the learner progress. Thus, the monitoring and evaluation of performance encompasses the monitoring of learner progress.

4.4.3.2 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

In the introduction, the Standard (DBE, 2015:5) notes that the purpose of transformation for ‘any education system is to bring about sustainable school improvement and profound change in the culture and practice of schools’. Thus, as instructional leaders, principals are required to promote a ‘culture of achievement for all learners by communicating and implementing’ a shared vision and mission in the schools (DBE, 2015:11). In consideration of these assertions, the Standard appears to be clear in articulating the meaning of creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning in schools

Furthermore, the Standard (DBE, 2015:13) requires principals to have knowledge of ‘strategies and approaches for the development of a learning culture in the school and for raising levels of achievement and excellence in context’. They also need to possess knowledge of ‘evidence derived from research and practice’ as the basis of improvement of teaching and learning, and the enrichment of learning culture. That the standard provides the basic knowledge that principals need to be

equipped with in order to create and sustain a culture that supports teaching and learning in public schools, confirms that high school principals as instructional leaders do have a role of creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning.

Moreover, in the actions relating to leading teaching and learning, principals are required to ‘promote a positive learning culture and ethos within the school’ (DBE, 2015:14). The Standard aligns this with principals’ ability ‘to demonstrate an understanding of principles and practices of effective teaching and learning through effective curriculum management’. This indicates that high school principals as instructional leaders need to ensure that a culture that supports teaching and learning exists sustainably in their schools.

Additionally, principals are also expected to draw on the ‘richness and diversity of the wider school community to develop the school culture and ethos’ (DBE, 2015:21). The Standard cites this undertaking as an action of working with and for the community. I understand and associate this statement with creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning simply because, earlier on, the Standard urged that principals need to capture the imaginations of the community in stating the schools’ vision and mission. Thus, high school principals as instructional leaders should ensure that their schools’ vision and mission which I have argued somewhere in this thesis that it is the underlying philosophy of the school, in some way reflects the culture of the community it serves. For me, this suggests that the Standard is indicating the influence of the culture of the wider community in informing the culture of teaching and learning in the school. So, principals must consider it and use it optimally to create the school’s culture of teaching and learning.

Protecting instructional time: In the actions relating to managing and advocating extramural activities, principals must ensure that Physical Education and Human Movement Studies are provided for in the timetable (DBE, 2015:19). I regard this action as a way of regulating the school’s non-instructional activities such that they do not interfere with instructional time. Thus, this action implies that principals as instructional leaders are trusted with the protection of instructional time.

Maintaining high visibility: In leading teaching and learning, principals are required to ‘maintain high visibility throughout the school’ (DBE, 2015:11). The Standard features this responsibility under the principal’s executive leadership as one of the five main kinds of leadership of leading teaching and learning in the school.

Promoting professional development: Regarding the actions relating to leadership of teaching and learning, the Standard requires principals to ensure that ‘educators have opportunities to access

quality professional development in order to improve their teaching’ (DBE, 2015:14). However, this action is not accompanied by suggestions as to how should principals go about ensuring that teachers have opportunities to access quality professional development to improve their instructional practice. Nonetheless, the Standard has advised principals to stay informed of development in educational matters by engaging themselves with research and other relevant literature while networking with ‘professional learning forums’ (DBE, 2015:14). The point that the Standard is making, seemingly, is that in leading teaching and learning, principals have a responsibility of ensuring that teachers participate in quality professional development.

In the area of Developing and Empowering Self and Others, the Standard (DBE, 2015:20) points out that principals have an overall responsibility to build a professional learning community in the school. Furthermore, the Standard notes that professional development can be realised in the form of empowerment which principals promote for those working in the school through provision of opportunities for shared leadership, teamwork and participation in decision making.

The Standard further requires principals to possess knowledge of ‘approaches to promoting continuing professional development’. They are also required ‘to be reflective to build personal capacity and be committed to their own continuing professional development’. Thus, by inspiring effective and pertinent continuing professional development opportunities principals supports the whole school development (DBE, 2015:20). Furthermore, the Standard proposes knowledge needed for ‘staff development’ that principals need in developing self and others (DBE, 2015:20). It points out that principals must have knowledge of how the three concepts relate namely performance management, continuing professional development and sustainable school improvement.

Moreover, the Standard (DBE, 2015:20) provides a range of actions expected of principals to take towards promoting development of self and others. These actions include but not limited to:

- Providing a range of opportunities for, and encourage and support engagement in the continuing professional development of everyone working in the school.
- Developing and maintaining effective procedures and practices for personnel processes such as induction, performance management and professional development.
- Engaging in an ongoing review of their own practice and accept responsibility for personal and professional development.

In sum, the Standard seems to emphasise the notion of professional development in which I also note the aspect of new teacher ‘induction’.

Providing incentives for teachers: In actions related to developing and empowering self and others, principals should implement processes to plan, support, allocate and evaluate the work of individuals and teams to guide and ensure improvement and ‘celebrate achievement’ (DBE, 2015:20). This is only where the Standard refers to acknowledgements of achievement with celebration, only when there is an indication of achievement of set goals of development by an individual or a team. This means that providing incentives for teachers is implied in the Standard.

Providing incentives for learning: This sub-meaning of creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning does not feature in the Standard.

4.5 INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted on school days at schools (principal’s office) during school hours, at each principals’ convenient and appropriate time. The interviews were recorded with the participant’s permission. The three participants were given pseudonyms and anonymity was maintained. Making sense of the data collected in the interviews has been continuous, during the conversation and after transcriptions.

4.5.1 Analysis of interviews

The data was collected from three high school principals as shown in table 4.5 (a) below which gives a summary of each participant’s biographical data which maps their different contents.

Table 4.5.1 (a) Biographical data of participants

Participant	Age	Highest qualification	Teaching experience	Experience as principal	School quintile	No. of teachers	No. of learners
Mr Star	55-65	M. ED	35	13	5	20[12]	700
Ms Nene	45-55	BA(ED): leadership & management III	20+	4	5	9[9]	320
Mr Sky	45-55	B. Ed. Hons.	20	9	1	39	1387

Principals generally remarked that instructional leadership is a diverse role. When principals were asked to trace the effects of their roles as instructional leaders on academic performance in grade 12 and exemplify this with any subject. Two principals mentioned mathematics. Ms Nene emphasised that *'we are very strong in mathematics ...'*, while Mr Sky was proud of the improvements they have made in mathematics *'... as we speak now they're at 77,5%'*. Consistent with literature, Mr Star in his dissatisfactory derision remarked that with the 30 and 40 percent minimum pass rate for subjects, *'even the frightening thing of free tertiary education, has impacted only 5% of kids from quintile 1, 2, and 3 schools'*. Furthermore, principals identified monitoring of instruction as their management role as instructional leaders while influencing, showing direction and networking viewed as a leadership role. Ms Nene stated that *'the general ethos is influenced by leadership. Umh, good relationships, for me, with the governing body, with staff, with parents, with learners; utmost important'*. Notably, the three high school principals seemed not sure of any national education policy that shape their roles as instructional leaders. They were all explicitly asked this question. One could not give any but said *'there are a lot of policies in place, I've just mentioned the disciplinary policy'* (referring to the own school). One said *'Mam that's a very broad question that you are asking. But let me see if ...'*. Then ended up mentioning the Employment of Educators Act. The other principal after a moment, mentioned the SASA and saying that *'which also states that the principal represents the Head of Department at the school'*. Only the two former Model C high schools had SGB employed educators (shown in brackets in the table). Next, I focus on the meanings of my study if they were articulated by the three high school principals.

4.5.1.1 Stating the school's vision and mission

The three high schools had school vision and mission statements. However, none of the principals mentioned that it is his/her role to ensure that the school has these. None of the three principals of the three has even mentioned that they influence the school's direction through the vision and mission of the school. They only mentioned it when I asked about it as it was displayed in their offices or in school corridors. Ms Nene said our vision is *'where individuals excel', every individual matters, every child matters in our school; that is why we say individuals'*. *'And when we say 'excel' we want to give want to give every child the opportunity to do the best they can'*. She seemed very clear in articulating the meaning of her school vision

Mr Sky said that they drew up their school vision and mission as a school (teachers, RCL, and SGB) with the assistance of a partnership they have with a certain organisation. When asked if the organisation is from the school's wider community, the answer was *'no'*. For him, the vision and

mission statements I saw in his office were newly stated since the one they had *‘was very long to be remembered’*. For me, this does not seem to be a sufficient condition. It then seemed like he had no grasp of the meaning of the school’s vision. For him as long as it was short and easy to memorise it was fine; Paulo Freire’s *‘bank education’*. I say this because, for me, the stating of the new vision would mean that the school has realised the former and can be articulated in the school’s achievement. It is worth noting that in accordance with Botha’s theory of instructional leadership, two high schools of the three had a list of values besides their vision and mission statements.

Framing the school goals: Ms Nene indicated that *‘we sit down and ask where do we want to be in three years’*. She identified this question as the bases of drawing an action plan which I have identified with framing the school goals in the ELAA analysis. She noted emphatically that *‘I always make sure that everybody buys to our action plan, I don’t say this is what we are going to do’*. *‘I say to everybody let’s work as a team: where do we see the school in three years?’* And everybody feels like they have an input, meanings are there, opinions are valued’,*and everybody wants to be part, everybody wants to make a difference’*. For her, the *‘core of implementing an action plan, people needs to believe in it, and give them ownership on it’*. She noted that drawing an action plan, which implies framing the school goals calls for one’s leadership qualities and management skills. She said, *‘put your vision into action plan’*.

Communicating the school’s goals: This sub-meaning did not feature in any of the principals’ articulation of their roles as instructional leaders.

4.5.1.2 Managing instructional programme

Mr Star is his teachers’ instructional resource. *‘I have to make sure that my teachers not only have the proper qualifications and proper content knowledge’* but also that they have the proper *‘pedagogy’*. Mr Sky noted that he allocates teachers according to their field of specialisation and this is how he exercises his management of instructional program. He also mentioned that he *‘ensures that each and every teacher has got a timetable’*. On the other hand, Ms Nene noted that she makes sure that she adheres to policies.

Supervising and evaluating instruction: Mr Sky delegates the classroom supervision to HoDs, while Mr Star has developed professional learning communities which then supervises classroom instruction more efficiently. He noted that although he does instructional supervision in class. *‘As a principal my presence in class does change the atmosphere’*. *‘With learning communities we are*

trying to get people to visit each other's classrooms as much as they possibly can'. On the other hand, Mr Sky pointed out that he does not have time to do all the things as *'I am the only one principal, there's a lot that I need to do'*. But he emphasised that he *'need to make sure that quality teaching that is happening there'*. Principals seemed not so keen in direct supervision and evaluation of instruction.

Coordinating the curriculum: The three schools indicated that they have LTSM policy. Mr Sky specified it asserts that all learners must have a textbook for every subject and the maintenance of that textbook. However, he was the only principal who did not have a computer lab. Looking concerned, he said *'a-l-l our computers were stolen'*. Mr Star indicated that they have two computer labs. To have appropriate LTSMs and to ensure that used correctly to facilitate and for improving and optimising learning opportunities while being consistent in their maintenance is one way of coordinating curriculum. Furthermore, the three principals articulated their inclination to teacher development which Mr Star noted that for him is focused on *pedagogy*. He also ensures that he does research on curriculum and new instructional developments and share that with the teachers. He noted that he needed to *'become a resource to my staff'*. Whereas Ms Nene remarked that she provides teachers with classroom strategies *'to ensure that all learners are included in the lesson, that effective differentiation takes place'*.

Monitoring learner progress: Mr Star pointed out that *'I am finally accountable for all the academic results ...in the school'*. He mentioned that *'first and foremost, I'm accountable to my learners for the results'*. *'My learners come here to do well'*. Mr Sky noted that they do results analysis every term and *'asked people to account'*. For him, this is one of the strategies that they employed to improve the matric academic results which were very low when he started at the school, even *'sank to 32%'* in his first year. *'And now we are above 80% for three consecutive years'*. Ms Nene noted that she makes sure that *'academic standards are adhered to'*.

4.5.1.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

Ms Nene seemed so passionate about the safety of learners in the school, classroom, and in the 'hostel'. *'The most important thing ...is the safety of our learners, at all times we make sure ... children can't learn when they don't feel safe'*. She mentioned that as an instructional leader *'first and foremost, you need to lead by example, integrity'*. She also noted the importance of listening to people, and listening to their problems *'it is very important for me to make sure that the staff knows that I genuinely care, but that we all care for the school'*. *'We can't be on top of the world everyday'*,

... *if I walk in as a leader positive and happy, the staff is positive and happy*. She also remarked on a gesture of smiling to her teachers in the morning who intern have to smile to learners in the classrooms *'and the children are more ready to learn, they feel acceptance'*. Concerning monitoring of instructional development, Mr Star emphasised that he creates a *'climate and culture in which you and I can speak to each other openly without any condemnation'*.

Protecting instructional time: Mr Sky mentioned that he ensures that if a teacher is absent from school he/she make up for the time lost and recovers the work. When Ms Nene expanded on leading by example, she remarked that *'I cannot expect the staff to be at school if I'm not at school. I cannot expect them to be on time if I'm not on time'*. The point is that high school principals seem to work towards protecting instructional time.

Maintaining high visibility: Mr Star aired that *'I do management by working around'*. *'Which means I can't, hahaha, hide in my office, I must be walking around, not to be a threat but to be part of the team'*. Ms Nene remarked that *'I have an open door policy. So, the staff can always come to me ...'* Moonsammy-Koopasammy has identified an 'open door policy' as a way of maintaining high visibility.

Promoting professional development: The three high school principals shared the idea of promoting professional development as their instructional leadership role. Ms Nene noted that as an instructional leader it is her role to create opportunities for professional development. *'... by providing proper ummh--development opportunities for the teachers'*. She then mentioned as an example that *'we recently sent two of their teachers on development opportunities to a course in Johannesburg for digital teaching strategies; they now going to use this brain trained strategies to be more creative in the classroom'*. *'We want to change the approach to ...'*. She also noted that the two teachers are going to train *'the rest of the staff'*. On the similar thought, Mr Sky mentioned that he has invited a neighbouring school principal to come and train teachers to use *'small computers' and tablets in the classroom*. While Mr Star has sent the Physical Science teacher to a neighbouring high performing school to learn different instructional approaches to the subject when he comes back *'I've got to say show me the programme that you're going to be implementing with colleagues'*. He also noted that he encourages his staff while he makes it possible for them to participate in the online learning games the *'kahoot'*. Notably, Ms Nene mentioned passionately that the new teacher induction process, saying that *'if we have a new teacher we put things in place and mentors are in place, so they also feel supported, and they don't get shaken ...'*. She noted that *'the most important year if you teaching is the first year is the first year because you have to make*

or break; and you have really to develop the teacher and support the teacher, and we give induction files and ...'.

Providing incentives for teachers: Mr Star noted that he is '*an enabler*'. He encourages and motivate teachers to connect with professional learning communities with which he then monitors their growth. Upon identification of such he makes it his responsibility to encourage teachers by saying '*that was good, that was good!*'

Providing incentives for learning: Although not one of the principals asserted this sub-meaning, Ms Nene keeps a file in the reception lounge table which anyone can access. This file has a record of the school highlights published as volumes, ranging from academic, cultural, and sport achievements. One section of a certain volume read '*It has become a tradition of our school that all learners obtaining more than 75% in an examination become part of the prestigious Club 75 or Breakfast Club. They are treated to breakfast*' *Congratulations to the following learners: ...*'

4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter was aimed at discussing the data collected from both the analysis of the purposefully selected educational policies and interviews. It began with an introduction, then followed by a brief outline of educational policy development in SA, focusing mainly on the policies that were subject to analysis in this study. The educational policies that I have analysed are the South African Schools Act (Act No 84 of 1996); the Education Laws Amendment Act (Act No. 31 of 2007); and the Policy on South African Standard for Principalship (DBE, 2015). I, then analysed the articulations of the three high school principals from different school context from two WCEDts. My analysis aimed at inquiring whether these two data sources articulate the high school principals' roles as instructional leaders with regard to the meanings and their sub-meanings that I have constructed for my study. The next chapter is dedicated to the presentation of findings from my data analysis; recommendations and conclusion thereof.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of my study which is triadic in nature was to conduct a hermeneutical inquiry in order to understand high school principals' roles as instructional leaders as articulated, first, from educational policy documents such as the SASA, ELAA, and the Standard. Second, the policy analysis was complemented with a small scale of interviews with high school principals from different school contexts; of which these interviews aimed at understanding how high school principals articulate their roles as instructional leaders. Third, the interviews also aimed at exploring how high school principals understand the effects of their articulations of their roles as instructional leaders on learners' academic results.

Thus, this chapter presents the research findings of my study. It begins with the discussion of findings as emerged from the literature review in **chapter 3**. It then proceeds to discuss the findings as revealed in the analysis of policies and the interviews of high school principals. Remarkably, I can confirm that the meanings of my study were addressed in these different fields of data collection, though in varying extents. I then discuss the significance of my study and its limitations thereof. I also provide some possible pathways for future research. I therefore end this chapter by giving a brief note of my concluding remarks.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The findings from the literature reveals that there is no single description of instructional leadership, it is a multifaceted concept. Different researchers describe it differently. I expected to find an instructional leadership description that was common in the field. But I find out that it means different things to different people, and it has since developed and gave rise to sister constructs such as leadership of/for learning; leader-centered leadership. The literature also showed that there are different theories of instructional leadership. The basic theory seemed to be that of Hallinger and Murphy (1985). The theories of instructional leadership seemed to share a common argument that instructional leadership of principals can only be understood in context. I found this insightful, since it mean that principals may align their instructional leadership roles with any of the theories that suit their context. The literature also showed that there are different approaches to principals' instructional leadership. One approach is narrow while the other one is broad.

Furthermore, the findings emanating from the literature revealed that the field of principals' instructional leadership is widely studied in SA. The question was does this mean we can hope for a positive change in the trend of learners' academic performance soon? My response to this question was that this would be possible if high school principals are exposed to reading research literature and draw inspirations to fulfil their roles from these. The literature further reveals that South African school principals have no adequate preparation for the principalship position. There is no professional entry qualification for principals. As such, they rely on their teaching experience and common sense to lead and manage their schools. This seemed to contribute on difficulties principals experience in fulfilling their roles as instructional leaders. The complexity of the principals' work was shown by the use of words like 'inundated'; 'under pressure'; 'more complex'; 'unmanageable' to describe either the state of principals as a result of their work or the work itself. The incompetence of principals has been blamed for the poor academic performance of high school learners, particularly in grade 12 national certificate. Consequently, there is an echoing call from professionals, scholars and researchers alike, for the introduction of a minimum professional qualification for South African principals. It is my call too.

5.3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE SASA

I first analysed the SASA with regard to my meanings of the principals' roles as instructional leaders. These meanings are stating the school's vision and mission; managing the instructional programme; and creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning. The findings revealed that the SASA makes no direct reference to any of the three meanings of my study. This puzzled me as I was expecting fundamental propositions about how high school principals of a democratic error were guided and expected to handle the transition to a single national education system with a focus on improving quality of education for all. However, the SASA made a proposition that the professional management of the school is the principal's responsibility which he/she undertakes under the authority of the HD. Although the phrase 'professional management' clearly implied the principals' instructional leadership (as show in chapter 4) among other things, it seemed to be interpretation laden. To some extent it appears both vague and illusive without clear-cuts of responsibilities. For me, this seemed to be a rationale behind the academic poor performance in high schools that is traced back to the decentralisation of decision-making powers that resulted to self-management of schools (Naicker & Mestry, 2016:1) a way that SASA paved as Bush (2007:393) contends.

5.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE ANALYSIS OF ELAA

The analysis of the ELAA provided a different perspective from that of SASA. It seemed to be more conscious about learners' academic performance as influenced by principals' roles as instructional

leaders. This is illustrated in the heading: ‘functions and responsibilities of principals of public school’. In these functions and responsibilities of principals my three meanings of the study are implied whereas some of their sub-meanings are explicitly stated. The explicitly stated sub-meanings seem to derive from the ELAA’s consciousness of the school’s academic performance which it prominently holds principals accountable for.

5.4.1 Stating the school vision and mission

The findings suggest that no reference has been made of stating the school vision and mission *per se*. However, this meaning can be understood through the framing of school goals and communicating the school goals. Thus, principals are required to draw an academic improvement plan at the beginning of the year annually. I understood this responsibility to imply the framing of school goals. The annual drawing of the ‘academic improvement plan’ indicates that principals’ roles as instructional leaders is enforced by the standard. This clearly indicates that the schools’ academic improvement is a continuous undertaking even if the school may achieve 100% in matric results which may imply a good academic processes in the internally examined grades, there will always be areas of improvement academically. This simply indicates that regardless of school context and its challenges, principals as instructional leaders have to lead academically improving schools. They must do what Bennis (2009:41-42) indicated, saying that leaders master the context, while managers surrender to it. The ELAA also emphasizes communication of goals in the form of the principal’s accountability to the HD and the SGB. The ELAA does not articulate ‘goals’ explicitly, rather principals are required to submit to the HD the schools’ academic plan and report on the progress made upon the implementation of the plan on the 30 June of that year. The principal must present the same report to the SGB. The academic progress can be realised if all the stakeholders (learners, teachers, and parents) buy into the communicated academic goals. Thus, principals ought to fluently communicate the academic goals to all the stakeholders if they want to report any progress made, progress starts with buying people to their vision.

5.4.2 Managing instructional programme

The findings show that principals are required to facilitate the ‘*implementation of all the educational programmes and curriculum activities*’. Although there are HoDs and deputy principals, principals are required to manage the instructional programme. This finding is contrary to Weber’s (1989) theory which advocates for the empowerment of ‘unformal’ instructional leaders within the school (Weber, 1987, 1989; Mbanjwa, 2014:30). Instead, it concurs with Hallinger and Murphy’s (1986) theory which makes it a central role of principals to manage instructional programme. My findings further revealed that principals

are expected to make a report on the ‘*effective use of available resources*’ which suggests the coordination of the curriculum. It then suggests that in this age of integrating ICTs to promote instruction, principals need to report how effective the schools’ instructional programme integrates ICTs to improve learners’ academic performance. Furthermore, monitoring learner progress is associated with the notion of reporting on the progress of the school’s academic performance to the HD and the SGB by the 30 of June each year. Reporting on the school’s academic performance means that the principal as an instructional leader has to engage immensely with data that shows learner progress before he/she draws up a comprehensive report that they present to the HD and the SGB concurrently.

5.4.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

The ELAA does not feature this meaning in its articulations. Next, I discuss findings from the Standard.

5.5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE STANDARD

The Standard has made the prominent pronouncements on the three meanings of this study. Although in some I needed to consult literature to gain deeper insights and understanding of its assertions. It was in the sub-meanings that the Standard mostly appeared to be a bit implicit or did not make any mention of such. For example, with regard to creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning, the providing incentives for learning was not mentioned in the standard; while providing incentives for teachers was mostly implied.

5.5.1 Stating the school vision and mission

The findings showed that the Standard expects principals to collaborate with SGBs, SMT, and with parents in the school’s community and other stakeholders to create a ‘*shared vision and mission to inspire and motivate all who work in and with the school and to provide direction for the school’s on-going development*’. This vision and mission should capture the ‘*core values and moral purpose of the school*’ while considering the ‘*national education values and the traditions of the school’s community and the values*’ cherished in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Notably, the schools’ vision and mission should embrace the interests and needs of the community. Furthermore, the findings revealed that principals should ensure that the vision and mission are translated into agreed goals and operational plans, designed to promote and sustain an on-going improvement. This is in line with the framing the school goals. In communicating the school goals, the findings show that the Standard does not make a

direct reference to this sub-meaning, instead principals are required to promote ‘*a culture of achievement for all learners by communicating vision and mission that is shared by all stakeholders*’.

5.5.2 Managing instructional programme

The findings showed that principals are required to develop and implement a data-driven and a research based instructional framework founded on the national curriculum. To do this, the findings show that principals need to have knowledge of ‘*evidence derived from research and practice to inform the improvement of learning and teaching and the enhancement of learning culture*’. Concerning the supervision and evaluation of instruction, the findings revealed that principals should facilitate a continuous ‘*monitoring and evaluation of educators in relation to all classroom practice*’. The findings further revealed that principals have a responsibility to ‘establish and maintain quality assurance systems and procedures’. The findings also showed that principals need to coordinate curriculum by ensuring that teachers fully understand the prescribed National Curriculum and have skills relating to teaching, monitoring, and evaluation; and as managers, principals need to create systems and processes to address curriculum implementation. Furthermore, principals need to monitor, evaluate, and review the quality and use of the school’s available resources to endorse a continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Regarding monitoring of learner progress, the findings revealed that requires principals to use ‘sound data’ to continuously monitor and evaluate learner progress and achievement.

5.5.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

Regarding this broader meaning of my study, the findings show that principals, as instructional leaders, are required to promote a ‘*culture of achievement for all learners by communicating and implementing*’ a shared vision and mission. They are further charged with promotion of a positive learning culture and ethos within the school. I also find that principals need to have knowledge of strategies and approaches to develop a learning culture in the school and to raise levels of achievement and excellence in relation to their contexts. The findings further show that principals are expected to draw on the ‘*richness and diversity of the wider school community to develop the school culture and ethos*’. The findings also showed that principals need to protect the instructional time by ensuring that Physical Education and Human Movement Studies are provided for in the timetable. Regarding maintaining high visibility, the findings revealed that as a means of leading teaching and learning, principals must ‘*maintain high visibility throughout the school*’. About promoting professional development, I found that principals need to ensure that ‘*educators have opportunities to access quality professional development in order to improve their teaching*’. Further to this, principals have a general responsibility to build a professional

learning community in the school and to empower those working in the school by providing opportunities for shared leadership, teamwork and participation in decision making. Notably, the findings showed that principals need to possess knowledge of *‘approaches to promoting continuing professional development’*; and *‘to be reflective to build personal capacity and be committed to their own continuing professional development’*. Lastly, the findings show that principals should evaluate the work of teachers as individuals and teams to guide and ensure improvement and *‘celebrate achievement’*.

5.4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The findings from the interviews revealed that principal’s instructional leadership role is very diverse. However, the three high school principals shared a view that their roles impact on the learners’ academic performance and viewed themselves as therefore accountable for such. They also showed a common understanding of their instructional leadership roles as encompassing both leadership and management roles. Nonetheless, the findings also showed that principals seemed not so in touch with the national education policies, not to mention it shaping their roles as instructional leaders. This finding leans towards Bhengu and Myende’s (2016:4) findings which showed that although principals understood that policies are meant to guide their leadership but they also believed that the contextual demands shape the actual ‘nature’ of the principal’s leadership. It is worth noting that the female principal seemed to articulate more clearly the importance of involving stakeholders in framing academic school goals, as this makes everyone to have ownership and be willing to work towards the realisation of the goals.

5.4.1 Stating the school vision and mission

Albeit the three high schools had vision and mission statements, principals did not mention it in their articulations of their roles as instructional leaders. To me, it seems like principals have no grasp of its significance in influencing the school’s instructional practice hence the school’s academic performance. For example, the one principal indicated that they changed their vision statement because of its length, and not on the basis of achieving the set vision and setting out to pursue new avenues. It seemed like communicating the school’s vision for him translates to reciting it word for word. Furthermore, besides the vision and mission statements, two high schools had established a list of school values. This finding is consistent with Botha’s (2004) theory of instructional leadership.

Regarding framing of the school goals, findings show that only the female principal implied this sub-meaning in her articulations. She used the term ‘action plan’ giving details on how to draw it and execute it, saying *“I say to everybody let’s work as a team: where do we see the school in three years?”* She

pointed out that you need to *'put your vision into action plan'*. The *'core of implementing an action plan, people needs to believe in it, and give them ownership on it'*. The words *'the core of implementing an action plan, people needs to believe in it'* captures the importance of getting the stakeholders involved in developing the school's mission.

5.4.2 Managing instructional programme

This meaning has been articulated by all the three principals in different perspective. They claimed that they ensure that teachers teach the subjects that have specialised in, they adhere to policies, and they do not only have proper subject but also the appropriate instructional practices. Concerning supervising and evaluating instruction findings show that they prefer to use indirect approaches to fulfil this responsibility. They employ the services of HoDs, or their established learning communities who do the classroom supervision then would report to the principal. This finding concurs with what Magwaza (2016:73) found out in her study, that principals assigned formal classroom supervision to SMTs. On the contrary, Beckor and Gorden's (2015:110) found that their participants viewed 'clinical supervision' as a function that needs to be founded on a 'collegial relationship between the principal and the teacher'. Beckor and Gorden finding showed that in the post observation conference principals must help teachers to develop their own plan of instructional improvement.

The findings also revealed that the principals put teaching and learning resources in place to improve the learning opportunities. This finding correlates with the finding made in the ELAA that principals need to report to the HD on the effective use of available resources. The female principal pointed out that in coordinating curriculum she ensures that lesson differentiation is properly done to include all learners in the lesson. To ensure 'lesson differentiation' clearly indicated that this principal attends to details when managing instructional programme in order to address the needs of all learners. About monitoring learner progress, the findings showed that the three principals monitored learner progress, they analysed the results each term, making sure that academic standards are adhered to, and making sure that learners are succeeding. As one principal said, *'my learners come here to do well'*.

5.4.3 Creating and sustaining a culture that supports teaching and learning

This meaning has been articulated by the three high school principals in varying degrees. These vary from leading by example, ensuring safety at all times within the school premises, to establishing a *'climate and culture'* that is free of criticism when conferencing with a teacher on instructional matters. The findings also revealed that principals are ensuring that the schools' instructional time is protected, whether by

making sure that they themselves are at school and are always on time or by creating opportunities to cover from the time lost due to absenteeism by a teacher. This finding concurs with the finding made by Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:85) where one principal who participated in her study indicated that he/she ensures that 'contact time' is protected. The findings also showed that principals maintain high visibility around the school or implement open door policy which is another way of keeping high visibility. This finding was also mentioned by Moonsammy-Koopasammy (2012:91) as her participants noted walking into classrooms at any time, and they had an 'open door' policy. Remarkably, the three high school principals articulated their efforts in promoting professional development.

The findings also revealed the pro-activeness of principals in creating professional development opportunities for their teachers. These opportunities range from making use of the neighbouring schools, online resources or going as far as sending teachers to other provinces. Mostly, the findings showed that this professional development focuses on instructional strategies rather than subject content. Notably, the female principal pointed out the importance of new teacher induction which she finds to be a significant professional development of new teachers. This finding is in agreement with what the Standard (DBE, 2015:20) provides as one of range of actions expected of principals, the induction of new teachers. About motivating and encouraging teachers, one principal indicated that he is an '*enabler*' making way for teachers to develop and praise them when they do. The word '*enabler*' seemed to suggest that high school principals as instructional leaders are there to make it possible for teachers to succeed in instructional matters. Regarding the providing incentives for learning, none of the principals articulated this sub-meaning. However, the female principal proved to have established a programme of praising and motivating learners for their success; publishing learners who achieved above 75% in the school's volume.

5.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research was, firstly, resulted from my personal interest to understand principals' roles as instructional leaders. Therefore, its significance can be understood in the sense that I have since gained insights and understanding on the concept. I can confirm a broadening of my horizon. Secondly, the concept of principal's instructional leadership is widely studied and is in the current educational discourses due to the continuous poor academic performance in schools among other things. Therefore, this study continues the discussions, adding new insights while provoking new questions. Moreover, the study analyses the Standard among other policies, a recently released educational policy that particularly concerns principals. I believe that it sheds some light pertaining the propositions of this text on principals'

roles as instructional leaders. Therefore, this study contributes to the body of the existing knowledge and the educational debates regarding roles of principals' instructional leaders.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I believe that being a new researcher, for me, posed limitations particularly in the area of interviews. Although participants are the ones who set the agenda, I also think that I could not properly manage practice wisdom and philosophical articulations, then I listened to what principals were telling me, which is what they do. Again, it would have been insightful to listen to the teachers' articulations of what they understand as principals' roles as instructional leaders

5.7 POSSIBLE PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Through my challenging yet exciting journey of my study, I happen to encounter some areas that appeals for further inquiry. The first one would be to inquire on how high school principals access and understand national education policy. Secondly, it would be to examine the importance of instructional leadership of Subject Advisers to that of a school principal. The area of principal's self- directed learning regarding instructional leadership also needs examination. Moreover, it would be to inquire if principals read research literature and draw inspirations from it. The last, but important, is the principals' understanding of the wider school community as influencing their instructional leadership.

5.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed my research findings. Firstly, I considered findings from the literature, followed by the findings from my analysis of the SASA, ELAA, and the Standard; then from the interviews. I then sketched the significance of my study and outlined its limitations thereof, and proposed some pathways for future research.

The high school principals' roles as instructional leaders are linked to the learners' academic performance particularly with regard to the matric NSC results. The recurring poor academic performance warrants an examination of these roles. As my study is grounded in the philosophy of education, I have tried to keep my questions philosophical, and used philosophical ways to answer these questions (current, 2007:2). Thus, the main research question for my study is: How do relevant statutory documents, education policies, and principals from different high school contexts articulate principals' roles as instructional leaders? The main research question was further supplemented by three sub-research

questions; first, how are high school principals' roles as instructional leaders articulated in relevant education policies? Second, how do high school principals from different school contexts articulate their roles as instructional leaders? And third, how do these principals understand the effects of their articulations of their roles as instructional leaders with regard to learners' academic performance? I analysed the national education policies and interviewed high school principals in relation to the meanings I constructed for my study. For Curren (2007:1), the purpose of philosophy of education is to understand and guide education, and its object is to study education. I can conclude that my meanings were articulated in varying extents in these sources of data. This has illuminated my understanding of principals' roles as instructional leaders.

I also find it worth noting that though the high schools I identified had school vision and mission, none of the principals made mention of it as a strategy of influencing the school's direction in improving learners' academic performance. However, they seemed resolute that their roles as instructional leaders impact on academic performance, and mostly exemplified using mathematics.

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APPENDIX**NOTICE OF APPROVAL**

REC Humanities New Application Form

6 July 2018

Project number: 6504

Project Title: A hermeneutical inquiry of high school principals' roles as instructional leaders

Dear Miss Vuyokazi Spengane

Your REC Humanities New Application Form submitted on 5 July 2018 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following for your approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
6 July 2018	5 July 2021

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (6504) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	Spengane Final Research Proposal Nov 2017	26/02/2018	
Data collection tool	INTERVIEW QUEST_1	26/03/2018	
Default	Research approval letter.WCED	26/03/2018	
Informed Consent Form	SU HUMANITIES Consent form template_22.3	26/03/2018	
Data collection tool	INTERVIEW QUEST_1	15/05/2018	
Proof of permission	Research approval letter.WCED	15/05/2018	
Default	Princ.LA	15/05/2018	
Default	RESPL.PC	15/05/2018	
Default	Princ.2RESPN	15/05/2018	
Informed Consent Form	SU HUMANITIES Consent form template_Editd.2	15/05/2018	

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at. Sincerely,

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.

The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

- 1. Conducting the Research.** You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.
- 2. Participant Enrollment.** You may not recruit or enroll participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.
- 3. Informed Consent.** You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.
- 4. Continuing Review.** The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period**. Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur**. If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.
- 5. Amendments and Changes.** If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.
- 6. Adverse or Unanticipated Events.** Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene

Fouche within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7. Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8. Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9. Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10. On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.